

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION  
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE  
ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS  
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April 28, 2023  
Start: 1:13 p.m.  
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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Shahana Hanif,  
Chairperson of Committee on  
Immigration

Sandra Ung,  
Chairperson of Committee  
Governmental Operations

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Carmen N. De La Rosa  
Rita C. Joseph  
Shekar Krishnan  
Francisco P. Moya  
Pierina Ana Sanchez  
Alexa Avilés  
Amanda Farias  
Brooks-Powers  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S

Jasniya Sanchez  
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs,  
Deputy Chief of Staff

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Social Worker in the Immigrant Community Action  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Workers Justice Project, WJP

Shana McCormick  
Executive Director for the Skyline Charitable  
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Dafni Ramirez  
Social worker and a Program Director of the  
Family Sanctuary Program at Volunteers of America  
Greater New York

Avaro Solis  
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Sebastian McGuire  
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Noah Elias Habeeb  
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Josh Bentley  
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Community Services of Metropolitan New York,  
Inc., KCS

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone test for  
4 the Committee on Governmental Operations jointly with  
5 the Committee on Immigration recorded by Ederly  
6 Gonzalez Rodriguez location at the Chambers. Today's  
7 date is April 28, 2023.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to  
9 the Committee on Immigration jointly with Government  
10 Operations. At this time, please place your phone on  
11 vibrate or on silent mode. If you want to submit  
12 testimony, send it to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

13 Once again that's [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Anytime  
14 during this hearing, do not approach the dais. Thank  
15 you for your cooperation. Chair, we are ready to  
16 begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Good afternoon everyone. I'm  
18 Council Member Shahana Hanif, Chair of the Committee  
19 on Immigration. Thank you for joining today's  
20 hearing with the Committee on Immigration and the  
21 Committee on Governmental Operations to discuss the  
22 needs of asylum seekers in New York City and  
23 accompanying legislation including Introductions 569,  
24 790, 839 and 909, and Resolutions 364, 365, 381, 459,  
25 532 and 556 and one preconsidered Res from Deputy  
Speaker Ayala.

3 I'd like to begin by thanking my Co-Chair Council  
4 Member Sandra Ung, Chair of the Committee on  
5 Governmental Operations for her support putting  
6 together this hearing. I want to thank my Council  
7 colleagues, representatives from the Administration  
8 and public for being here to members of the public  
9 participating remotely.

10 It's so important that we are here today to hear  
11 from agencies and advocates who are deeply involved  
12 with meeting the needs of asylum seekers. Since our  
13 last hearing on this topic in December 2022, the  
14 immigration population of New York City has grown  
15 significantly with over 55,000 asylum seekers coming  
16 to New York and over 33,000 remaining in the city's  
17 care.

18 These folks have traveled thousands of miles  
19 fleeing violence or economic disasters for the  
20 opportunity to begin again in New York City. They  
21 are here for the opportunity to live without fear, to  
22 work, to provide for themselves and for their  
23 families and to find joy in the day to day once more.  
24 These newly arrived immigrants are ready to start new  
25 lives but face serious challenges and it is our  
responsibility to mitigate these challenges and

3 remind everyone that New York City is a city of  
4 immigrants and a city of opportunity.

5 With numbers increasing every day and as we  
6 prepare to welcome more asylum seekers to New York,  
7 at the end of Title 42, we must ensure that our  
8 services and infrastructure are sturdy enough to  
9 provide quality care for new arrivals. While also  
10 ensuring that services and infrastructure are  
11 functioning effectively for asylum seekers currently  
12 here. New York City has been and will always be a  
13 sanctuary city and we'll continue to treat those who  
14 come to us with the dignity and respect they deserve.

15 New Yorkers continue to show that we welcome new  
16 neighbors no matter where they come from and are  
17 prepared to meet their needs. I want to take a  
18 moment to condemn recent rhetoric from the Mayor that  
19 is run counter to this welcoming spirit. Last week,  
20 he said the migrant crisis is destroying New York  
21 City, which fan the flames of xenophobic sentiment.

22 I understand that he made this comment in the  
23 context of advocating for much needed federal funding  
24 to support asylum seekers but we can call for other  
25 levels of government to step up without demonizing  
our newest New Yorkers. As we head into the home

3 stretch of the city's budget season, I want to be  
4 clear that I reject how the Mayor has pitted  
5 vulnerable communities against each other. Investing  
6 in our recent immigrants does not come at the expense  
7 of longer-term residents. It helps our entire city's  
8 ecosystem thrive. Today's hearing seeks to ensure  
9 that the asylum seekers who have come to New York  
10 City seeking safety and opportunity are being  
11 provided both. The Administration has taken steps to  
12 provide asylum seekers with the resources they need  
13 including food, housing, clothing, legal services,  
14 health care and education for their children.

15 Over the last year, New York City agencies have  
16 introduced over 100 emergency shelters, 8  
17 humanitarian emergency response centers, and a  
18 navigation center in 8 satellite sites. The Adams  
19 Administration has also recently introduced plans to  
20 make a 24/7 arrival center and an office of asylum  
21 seeker operations. We are incredibly grateful for  
22 the dedication of the city agencies in these efforts  
23 but want to use our time today to ensure that these  
24 efforts adequately and equitably fulfill the needs of  
25 our asylum seekers.



3 Additionally, we are immensely grateful to be  
4 advocates who have been on the ground since day one  
5 providing immeasurable support and resources to meet  
6 the needs of asylum seekers. We look forward to  
7 hearing from Administration, advocates and asylum  
8 seekers today to acknowledge any gaps or areas of  
9 improvement in the delivery of services and make  
10 necessary and effective changes to fill those gaps.

11 Our hearing today will also address multiple  
12 pieces of legislation including two of my bills that  
13 seek to benefit both newly arrived asylum seekers and  
14 immigrants who have been living and working in New  
15 York. My first bill, Intro. 909 will enhance the  
16 IDNYC application process. IDNYC is available to all  
17 New Yorkers regardless of immigration status and  
18 provides access to benefits and services across the  
19 city. I want to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala and  
20 Council Member Brewer for introducing this bill  
21 alongside me and the 12 additional Council Members  
22 who signed on as sponsors. I also want to thank  
23 Brooklyn Defender Services whose insights have been  
24 essential on this issue. This bill seeks to permit  
25 same day and walk in appointments at IDNYC enrollment  
centers, provide adequate in-person application

3 appointments to match the growing demands for IDNYC  
4 cards, develop a training program for IDNYC workers  
5 on the application process and provide an appeal  
6 system for applicants who have been denied ID cards  
7 previously.

8 Due to the success of an overwhelming demand for  
9 IDNYC, we must respond to any barriers in accessing  
10 the card and effectively update the IDNYC application  
11 process.

12 My second bill Intro. 569, seeks to empower our  
13 city's immigrant workers through the creation and  
14 distribution of an immigrant workers Bill of Rights.  
15 Immigrant workers are often vulnerable to employment  
16 abuses, like wage theft or threats of deportation.  
17 All of which are heinous and illegal. I want to  
18 thank Council Member Avilés for introducing this bill  
19 alongside me and the additional 13 Council Members  
20 who have signed on as sponsors. I also want to thank  
21 incredible worker advocates including the New York  
22 City Central Labor Council, the Consortium for Worker  
23 Education and the Worker Justice Project for their  
24 support of this legislation.

25 This immigrant worker bill of rights would  
contain information on the rights and protections

3 under federal, state and local laws that apply to all  
4 workers in the city regardless of their immigration  
5 status.

6 Intro. 569 would require employers to distribute  
7 the bill of rights to all employees and independent  
8 contractors. Employers would also be required to  
9 display the bill of rights conspicuously in the  
10 physical work place or in the case of at based  
11 workers, such as delivery workers directly on the  
12 mobile app.

13 As we determinedly push for and await changes to  
14 work authorization for asylum seekers at the federal  
15 level, New York City can prepare our workplaces to  
16 ensure immigrant workers are protected and made aware  
17 of their rights. The remainder of the bills included  
18 in today's hearing highlight additional protections  
19 and actions for immigrants in New York City and I am  
20 grateful to the sponsors Council Member Farias,  
21 Brewer, Hudson, Brooks-Powers, and Avilés of whom are  
22 also here today to speak about their bills.

23 We all look forward to hearing from the  
24 Administration, advocates and immigrants on their  
25 response to the hearings attached legislation. I  
want to thank all the Committee Staff on their work

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3 on this issue including Jayasri Ganapathy Senior  
4 Legislative Counsel, Rebecca Barilla Policy Analyst,  
5 Erica Cohen Policy Analyst and Florentine Kabore  
6 Finance Analyst and Ross Goldstein also Finance  
7 Analyst. I also want to thank my staff, Chief of  
8 Staff Nora Brickner, Legislative Director Alex Laio,  
9 Communications Director Michael Whitesides, and  
10 everyone working in the background to make this joint  
11 hearing run smoothly.

12 Now, I will turn it over to Council Member Ung  
13 for her opening statement.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Good afternoon, I'm City  
15 Council Member Sandra Ung, Chair of the Committee on  
16 Governmental Operations. I want to thank everyone  
17 for planning and participating in this vitally  
18 important hearing about meeting the needs of asylum  
19 seekers. Conducting on the Committee of Immigration,  
20 I want to thank my Co-Chair Shahana Hanif and our  
21 staffs for all their hard work in putting this  
22 hearing together. I would like to welcome our  
23 colleagues who have joined us, Council Member De La  
24 Rosa, Council Member Brooks-Powers, Council Member  
25 Farias and Avilés. I'm an immigrant myself. My  
family moved here from Cambodia when I was only seven

3 years old and although I was a child when I first  
4 came to New York, I understand how important it is to  
5 ensure that New York City is meeting the needs of  
6 immigrants and asylum seekers who come to the city  
7 looking for a better life for themselves and their  
8 family, just like my family did.

9 At today's hearing, we will be looking into  
10 whether the city is providing these new arrivals with  
11 sufficient resources. While acknowledging the work  
12 that's been done by the agencies that have come here  
13 to testify today, along with so many others to insure  
14 the needs of asylum seekers are being met, we must  
15 also look into the gaps in services that need to be  
16 addressed.

17 In addition to oversight, we'll also be  
18 considering the legislation Chair Hanif discussed and  
19 I want to acknowledge the sponsors of these bills and  
20 Resolution. I want to highlight Intro. 798 sponsored  
21 by Council Member Brewer and several colleagues which  
22 is being heard by the Governmental Operations  
23 Committee. This bill will make it easier for people  
24 to obtain a widely accepted form of identification by  
25 adding to a list of documents that could be used to  
verify their identity when applying for IDNYC. This

3 includes documents issued by Federal Immigration  
4 Authorities, Street Vendor Licenses, Record of  
5 arrests or letters from a legal service organization.

6 These additional documents will make it easier for  
7 asylum seekers and many others to apply for IDNYC.

8 And while the Human Resource Administration, the  
9 agency that administered the IDNYC program, currently  
10 accepts some but not all of these documents. This  
11 law will expand and/or codify their acceptance.

12 Asylum seekers often have their documents confiscated  
13 when they present themselves to the border or they  
14 have only counselor identification cards, driver's  
15 license or birth certificates issued by the country  
16 of origin, which are not widely accepted in the  
17 United States.

18 Having American government issue form of  
19 identification allows them to open bank accounts,  
20 access public buildings and simplify interactions  
21 with the law enforcement and others. And it's not  
22 only asylum seekers who benefit from IDNYC. The  
23 LGBTQ youth and transgender New Yorkers and others  
24 can benefit from having accessible form of ID that  
25 affirms the gender identity by allowing them to

3 [00:07:56] of their gender or no gender identity at  
4 all.

5 One thing that all these groups have in common is  
6 that they often lack access to documents required to  
7 get other types of government issued ID's. By  
8 expanding the documents that applicants can use to  
9 provide the identity, we can make this critical  
10 service available to more individuals. Whether they  
11 are asylum seekers, LGBTQ, or just simply individuals  
12 who don't have access to additional identity  
13 documentation. I'm hopeful that this bill, along  
14 with other bills and Resolutions being considered  
15 today will help thousands of asylum seekers coming to  
16 New York now and in the future and I look forward to  
17 discussing them on greater detail of the  
18 Administration.

19 And I want to thank member of the public as well  
20 as representatives from all the agencies that have  
21 come to testify today. I want to thank Jayasri  
22 Ganapathy, Rebecca Barilla, Erica Cohen for the  
23 Central Staff of putting this hearing together and  
24 finally, I'd like to thank my own Chief my Staff  
25 Alexander Hart and my Communications Director Shane

3 Miller for their assistance. I will now turn it back  
4 over to Chair Hanif.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I  
6 will turn it over to Majority Whip Selvena

7 Brooks-Powers for her opening statement.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you Chair.  
9 I thank the Committee for hearing Resolution 532,  
10 which requests the state to recognize the asylum-  
11 seeking crisis as an emergency and increase the flow  
12 of funding to the city to address it.

13 The city needs more resources to ensure we can  
14 continue to welcome those who need our help to the  
15 city. To ensure that everyone who arrives here can  
16 do so with dignity and build a life in New York City  
17 and beyond. We've worked to help tens of thousands  
18 of asylum seekers so far and we will continue to do  
19 so as long as they come to New York City. But we  
20 need the assistance of our state and federal partners  
21 to serve newcomers effectively over the long term.

22 This Resolution specifically calls on Governor  
23 Kathy Hochul to declare an emergency under Section 2B  
24 of the New York State executive law to direct funds,  
25 administrative resources and services to aid asylum



3 seekers. Seeing firsthand how our entire shelter  
4 system has been overwhelmed has forced many  
5 communities like the district I represent to  
6 disproportionately show the dis crisis, placing  
7 stress on our schools and other services. The  
8 Governor's power to declare states of emergency  
9 should be deployed in crisis's like this. Those  
10 living here in New York know that this is an  
11 emergency and that the help of the state is essential  
12 to addressing it.

13 Again, I thank the Committee for hearing this  
14 legislation today and I look forward to discussing  
15 how we can ensure the city continues to meet this  
16 challenge effectively and compassionately. Thank  
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much Majority  
19 Whip Brooks-Powers. I'd now like to turn it over to  
20 Council Member Farias for her opening statement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Good afternoon everyone.  
22 Thank you Chairs Hanif and Ung for giving me the time  
23 to speak on my bill Resolution 459. This Resolution  
24 is in conjunction with and in support of assembly  
25 bill 568 introduced by my neighbor Assembly Member

3 Kenny Burgos and Senate Bill 1802 introduced by State  
4 Senator Jessica Ramos.

5 My bill calls on the state legislature to pass  
6 and the Governor to sign Assembly Member Burgos and  
7 Senator Ramo's bills prohibiting municipalities from  
8 requiring employers to use e-verify and prohibiting  
9 employers from using it to check the status of an  
10 existing employee or an applicant who has not yet  
11 been offered employment.

12 As we continue to welcome new neighbors into New  
13 York City, one of the largest issues we've had so far  
14 is how to help our thousands of asylum seekers who  
15 are fleeing not only persecution but lack of economic  
16 opportunities. People are coming to New York City  
17 and America each and every day in pursuit of a better  
18 life for themselves and the next generation of their  
19 family. But the requirement of e-verify contradicts  
20 the rhetoric that our county has advertised for  
21 decades. That here you can achieve the American  
22 dream. Our main priorities need to be focused on  
23 supporting workers upward economic mobility and  
24 filling in job vacancies across the city, not blaming  
25 our newest neighbors for feeling unsafe conditions

3 and ushering them to deal with years back and forth  
4 on their employment eligibility.

5 Finding work is a basic and essential first step  
6 for people to be able to build an independent life  
7 for themselves and their families. We should always  
8 prioritize providing the best resources for those  
9 entering the workforce to grow and be successful.  
10 The e-verify system only prohibits slows that down.  
11 Without the ability to move forward with needed work  
12 authorizations, asylum seekers are forced to look for  
13 work and unregulated economies that leaves them  
14 vulnerable to abuse and wage theft.

15 While this Resolution calls on the state it is  
16 absolutely essential that our federal, state, and  
17 city governments are working together to support the  
18 needs of our continuing newest arrivals and the  
19 economic health of our city. The City Council is  
20 doing just that and I hope our governor and federal  
21 and state colleagues will too. Thank you to Chairs  
22 Hanif and Ung for giving me the time to speak on this  
23 important legislation and I urge all of my colleagues  
24 to sign on to Reso. 459. Thank you.  
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you and finally, I'd  
4 like to turn it to Council Member Avilés for her  
5 opening statement.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Thank you Chairs Hanif  
7 and Ung for holding this hearing today and for  
8 considering my bill Resolution 381 in addition to  
9 among all the legislation that is being considered  
10 today, which is critically important to many of my  
11 constituents in District 38, of which 50 percent are  
12 foreign born.

13 I also would like to thank my colleagues and  
14 members of the Committee for allowing me this  
15 opportunity to speak on behalf of this Resolution. I  
16 want to start first the conversation by grounding it  
17 in our collective experience. As Americans and  
18 further as New Yorkers, each of us in this room today  
19 with the exception of our Native American siblings,  
20 are brought together by an immigration story. For  
21 some of us in this room, that story begins with a  
22 painful knowledge that our distant loved ones were  
23 brought and sold.

24 For some of us that story may start with a parent  
25 or a grandparent deciding to actively seek better  
conditions. For others of us, the story may actually

3 start with you. But whether the story starts, we  
4 must honor the incredible bravery and fortitude of  
5 all of those who have faced the overwhelming reality  
6 of being in a strange and foreign land. Take a  
7 moment and imagine the conditions those before us  
8 must have experienced before finding themselves here.  
9 During the past year, many of our recent migrant  
10 families are fleeing parts of South America, among  
11 other places in the globe where they are faced with  
12 soaring inflation, food, medicine shortages, threats  
13 to their physical safety, profound poverty. For some  
14 of us, this might reflect our own immigration story.  
15 And while so much healing and work needs to be done  
16 in terms of reconciling the continued mistreatment of  
17 so many of our people with our shared view and  
18 understanding of American democracy.

19 I nonetheless am proud to live in a city that  
20 continues to honor the tradition of being the first  
21 to offer an opportunity to Americans who may have  
22 been denied the value of their labor elsewhere or the  
23 first home for so many new Americans. What may be  
24 different about many of the 50,000 new Americans who  
25 have landed in our city in recent months, is that for  
the first time in modern history, a large number of

3 these asylum seekers may be here against their will.

4 Many of our recent asylees report that when they  
5 first arrived in states like Texas and Florida, they  
6 were promised some combination of shelter, financial  
7 support, help obtaining work permits or English  
8 language lessons in exchange for jumping on a bus to  
9 an undisclosed location.

10 For some, that location turned out to be New York  
11 City and for others, maybe Martha's Vineyard, maybe  
12 Chicago. Make no mistake, border officials were  
13 given the directive to hoodwink asylum seekers to  
14 jump on a bus in an act of coercion and worse,  
15 exploitation. Republican governors who have no  
16 qualms about shuffling humans across borders without  
17 their consent for the sake of political gain. In  
18 fact, engaging in human trafficking.

19 Reso. 381, which we are considering today,  
20 condemns the actions of these states. Let's honor  
21 the unimaginable struggle that can often spend  
22 generations to attain dignity in this country and  
23 acknowledge how much more complex that process has  
24 made when you are denied choice.

25 In this city of immigrants, we need to set the  
standard that acknowledges our past, embraces our

3 collective humanity and denounces human trafficking  
4 in all its forms, even when it is carried out by the  
5 state. Thank you Chairs for hearing this Resolution  
6 today. Thank you Chair Hanif for your opening  
7 statement and your work to introduce the Immigrant  
8 Worker Bill of Rights, among all the other  
9 legislation put forward today. Thank you so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd like to  
11 acknowledge that we've been joined by my colleagues  
12 Council Member Shekar Krishnan and Francisco Moya on  
13 Zoom.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member and  
15 good afternoon everyone. My name is Jayasri  
16 Ganapathy, I am Counsel to the Committee on  
17 Immigration and before we begin testimony today, I'd  
18 like to remind everyone that is joining us via Zoom,  
19 that you will be on mute until you are called upon to  
20 testify. I will be calling on public witnesses to  
21 testify after the conclusion of the Administrations  
22 testimony and Council Member questions.

23 So, please listen carefully at that time for your  
24 name to be called. Council Members, you will be  
25 called on for questions after the full panel has  
completed testimony and we will be limiting Council

3 Member questions to two minutes. I will now call on  
4 the members of the Administration to testify. Today,  
5 we have Jasniya Sanchez from the Mayor's Office of  
6 Immigrant Affairs, Deputy Chief of Staff and for  
7 question and answers we have Dr. Albert Gamarra,  
8 Assistant Deputy Commissioner for IDNYC from Human  
9 Resources Administration. And Carlos Ortiz,  
10 Assistant Commissioner from Department of Consumer  
11 and Worker Protection.

12 If you can please raise your right hands. Do you  
13 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
14 nothing but the truth before the Committees and  
15 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

16 PANEL: I do.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ms. Sanchez, you  
18 can begin when you're ready.

19 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thank you very much. Good  
20 afternoon, Chairs Hanif and Ung and members of the  
21 Immigration and Governmental Operations committee.  
22 Thank you for holding this hearing. My name is  
23 Jasniya Sanchez, I am the Deputy Chief of Staff of  
24 the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and today I  
25 am joined by Dr. Albert Gamarra, Assistant Deputy



3 Commissioner at IDNYC, and Carlos Ortiz, Assistant  
4 Commissioner at DCWP, who will be available for Q&A.

5 New York City continues to lead the nation in its  
6 response to this unprecedented humanitarian  
7 emergency, with a coordinated, multi-agency effort  
8 that humanely meets the immediate, medium and long-  
9 term needs of those who have arrived amidst this  
10 immigration crisis. Since last spring, the city has  
11 served over 57,000 asylum seekers. As of Wednesday  
12 evening, over 36,000 people were in the City's care  
13 at 110 emergency centers and eight HERRCs. The lead  
14 agencies on this have been the Department of Homeless  
15 and Department of Social Service, Health and  
16 Hospitals, New York City Emergency Management, MOIA,  
17 and most recently New York City Housing Preservation  
18 and Development, as they operate the city's newest  
19 HERRC; with the entire city pitching in resources and  
20 staff to support these new arrivals.

21 As of March 31, 2023, New York City alone has  
22 incurred more than \$817 million in costs related to  
23 housing and caring for the asylum seeker population.  
24 Over Fiscal Year 2023, the city anticipates spending  
25 \$1.4 billion, and \$2.9 billion in Fiscal Year 2024.

3 This means an estimated total of \$4.3 billion will be  
4 spent by June 30, 2024.

5 This Administration's efforts to date, to provide  
6 shelter and numerous other support services, as we  
7 have shared in previous hearings, to approximately  
8 over 57,000 asylum seekers, who have arrived since  
9 last spring, have been extraordinary. We continue to  
10 receive approximately 200 asylum seekers each day,  
11 becoming a humanitarian emergency that has put an  
12 enormous strain on the shelter system. Due to the  
13 urgent demand for beds for those arriving daily, the  
14 city has opened about 110 new emergency shelters.  
15 The city's first Asylum Seeker Resource Navigation  
16 Center, operated by Catholic Charities of New York  
17 through a city contract, opened on September 15,  
18 2022.

19 It serves as a central place where newly arrived  
20 asylum seekers receive free and confidential help to  
21 access a variety of important services and resources,  
22 including health care, education, and immigration  
23 legal services, that will help them integrate and  
24 thrive in New York City. These services are also  
25 available at shelters across our city. The center  
continues to support individuals and families who

3 have arrived in New York City on or after January 1,  
4 2022.

5 The opening of the Navigation Center was shortly  
6 followed by the opening of 12 satellite site  
7 locations across the city in late December. As of  
8 April 21, 2023, the Navigation Center has served  
9 14,462 individuals across 6,149 households. As of  
10 the latest figures from the satellite sites, 9,036  
11 individuals have served and in total across the  
12 system, 23,498 individuals have been served.

13 New York City invests tens of millions of dollars  
14 annually into immigration legal services, recognizing  
15 that immigration legal services are a tool of  
16 empowerment for immigrant New Yorkers and their  
17 families. Legal services can help immigrant New  
18 Yorkers stabilize their immigration status and access  
19 jobs, health insurance, and education, ultimately  
20 benefiting the city as a whole. In response to the  
21 surge of recent arrivals, so far, the city has  
22 provided more than 4,000 newly arrived asylum seekers  
23 with legal orientations and has piloted multiple  
24 screening and asylum application assistance events.

25 The Adams administration has also allocated \$5  
million in new immigration legal funding for the

3 Asylum Seeker Legal Assistance Network, also known as  
4 ASLAN, for Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024.

5 This funding will expand access to immigration legal  
6 information, orientation, individual consultations,  
7 brief advice, and application assistance for asylum  
8 seekers. We are currently finalizing the program  
9 model, for public release soon.

10 As this administration has said time and again,  
11 New York City cannot do this alone. Last week, our  
12 Commissioner, Manuel Castro joined Mayor Adams in a  
13 national call to our federal government to provide  
14 much needed additional support and use every tool at  
15 their disposal to create pathways, for both those who  
16 are already here as well as our newest arrivals.

17 There are concrete steps that the federal government  
18 can take right now to expedite work authorization for  
19 asylum seekers.

20 These include re-authorizing Temporary Protected  
21 Status to a more recent date and extending the  
22 eligibility period, allowing a higher number of  
23 asylum seekers to access TPS protection, and to  
24 receive work authorization for Venezuela, Honduras,  
25 El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Sudan, South  
Sudan, and Cameroon; providing access to humanitarian

3 parole for asylum seekers in the US and at border  
4 crossings; and providing additional USCIS officers to  
5 process key application types which would  
6 significantly reduce processing times.

7 Finally, it is critical that the Council, the  
8 state, and the federal government work with the  
9 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the  
10 Administration to further confront the challenges of  
11 this complex humanitarian emergency.

12 I want to be clear that no other city has stepped  
13 up to receive thousands of asylum seekers, the way  
14 New York has, all while providing resources and  
15 services to over three million long time immigrant  
16 New Yorkers. Our office looks forward to the  
17 Council's partnership in calling on the federal and  
18 state government for support. Thank you and I look  
19 forward to your questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I'd like  
21 to acknowledge that we are also joined by Council  
22 Member Restler.

23 I'd like to begin with the HRA on IDNYC. Thank  
24 you so much for being here and want to just kick off  
25 with Intro. 909. So, we know that IDNYC is a vital  
piece of identification for New Yorkers providing us

3 with access to a wide range of benefits and services  
4 and particularly a critical resource for immigrant  
5 New Yorkers and asylum seekers who may have  
6 difficulty obtaining alternative ID. When I was a  
7 Council Staffer helping more constituents enroll in  
8 IDNYC, it was some of the work I was most proud of.  
9 However, despite its importance, many New Yorkers are  
10 still unable to obtain IDNYC due to an inefficient  
11 enrollment process.

12 Currently, appointments need to be made far in  
13 advance on an online scheduler that is extremely  
14 difficult to use even for the most tech savvy New  
15 Yorkers. Intro. 909 address this issue by requiring  
16 DDC to offer same day walk in appointments for IDNYC.  
17 The bill also requires an onsite appeals process for  
18 applicants who are denied regular training for staff  
19 to ensure they are up to date in any changes to  
20 documentation that is accepted as proof of  
21 identification and regular assessments to determine  
22 the amount of appointments that need to be made  
23 available.

24 This bill and Council Member Brewster's Intro. 790  
25 will improve access to IDNYC for the New Yorkers who

3 need it most. Can you clarify HRA's position on  
4 Intro. 909? Your mic might not be on.

5 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, we agree with the intent  
6 of the bill. Just to provide some clarity, we do  
7 offer walk-ins. We've been doing so for a couple of  
8 months now. The language on the website and  
9 everything has been clarified, so everything you know  
10 indicates this is consistent. With that, is that the  
11 discretion of staff based upon availability and  
12 capacity at the site.

13 In regards to the appeals process, we've had an  
14 appeals process for IDNYC in person for many years  
15 that allows us to work with applicants so they can  
16 get an IDNYC card. In terms of on the online appeals  
17 process, that's a little bit more complex due to  
18 privacy reasons, cyber security, document review and  
19 so, that will take a little bit more discussion to  
20 get there but we do have many of these items already  
21 in place to kind of work towards the solutions that  
22 you have identified.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's really great to know.  
24 Could you share how many walk-ins you've seen over  
25 the last several months that this option has been  
made available?

3 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I do not have that data in  
4 front of me but I can get it for you.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That would be really  
6 wonderful and could you share why that change had  
7 been made?

8 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, a lot of the changes that  
9 we had come about as the pandemic ended. It was  
10 capacity based at our partner sites and we wanted to  
11 be respectful to you know, honor social distancing  
12 and these matters. So, once a lot of those were  
13 removed, it allowed us to implement new measures to  
14 increase access and capacity for applicants.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, if I now go online to  
16 schedule an IDNYC appointment, will I see a prompt  
17 that says I have the option of walking into a site?

18 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: The language on the website  
19 has been updated, so you should see information  
20 regarding the capacity and availability of walk-ins  
21 at sites.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, then just to clarify, at  
23 this moment in time in our city, every New Yorker who  
24 wants to apply for IDNYC, can walk in to a site and  
25 begin the application process?



3 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Based on capacity of the  
4 site. And so, that's where the site supervisor is to  
5 determine capacity and what we try to do is if we  
6 cannot meet the need on the same day, we work with  
7 them to provide an appointment at that site or the  
8 site that they choose.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood, so could you talk  
10 to me a little bit more about the sites. How many  
11 sites are there and then what is the IDNYC teams  
12 capacity?

13 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: We currently have 16 sites  
14 and we are budgeted for 175 staff members.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And 16 sites across the five  
16 boroughs?

17 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That's great. So, just  
19 coming back to the bit about how to apply. It no  
20 longer says that it's by appointment only? Okay,  
21 that language has been clarified because we had taken  
22 a look at that. So, that's good, that's really good  
23 news. I think that really ensures accessibility and  
24 creates some ease on folks that I know our colleagues  
25 have been encouraging asylum seekers and our  
constituents to get an IDNYC card.

3 How many IDNYC applications were filed in the  
4 last year?

5 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: In 2022, we had 94,711  
6 applications for IDNYC.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, over 94,000 and is the  
8 trend that this is going up? Are we seeing an  
9 increase in applications?

10 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I'm happy to report that  
11 we're near prepandemic numbers, so that's getting us  
12 back to a normal state, a steady state.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Incredible. And of the  
14 applicants, how many were rejected?

15 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: In 2022, 6,617 applications  
16 were denied but to clear, this may include repeat  
17 submission. So, sometimes individuals are insistent  
18 on applying even though we explain the documentation  
19 is not you know acceptable. So, they'll come back a  
20 couple of times until we inform them correctly.  
21 There's a lot of misinformation and we try to work  
22 with the shelters. We try to work with the locations  
23 where the individuals are when they are applying, so  
24 they're aware of the documentation. We do accept  
25 offer what alternates are available to get them where  
they need to be to get an IDNYC card.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Is that the primary reason  
4 for rejections?

5 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what are the others?

7 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, it's generally, it is  
8 generally the lack of complying documents under the  
9 rules, under the program rules is the reason why.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood and then, how does  
11 this data, the amount of rejections number that you  
12 shared with us compared to the data from previous  
13 years? Are you seeing fewer or are there fewer  
14 rejections?

15 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: It's in alignment with the  
16 previous years.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay and then are there any  
18 trends that we should be aware of? I know you  
19 mentioned that the number of applicants is back to  
20 prepandemic times. What are you all working on to  
21 make sure that we have more New Yorkers apply for the  
22 IDNYC card?

23 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I think it's about raising  
24 awareness, meeting the community where they are to be  
25 aware of what IDNYC is, the benefits attached with  
it, how it can serve all vulnerable populations and

3 all New York City residents and I just think it's a  
4 matter of that and finding ways to increase  
5 efficiency as we come out of the pandemic  
6 restrictions that were in place.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And what are some of the  
8 initiatives or outreach campaigns that you all are  
9 implementing in order to do so?

10 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, we're reviewing how we  
11 broadcast information on IDNYC across our social  
12 media. We always work with our partner agencies and  
13 community organizations about information on IDNYC.  
14 We work with our partners within DSS to make sure  
15 that where folks are staying, the vulnerable  
16 communities, the unhoused. Our social services  
17 clients that we provide information and accessibility  
18 for IDNYC.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great, and I know you  
20 mentioned or highlighted the 100 and is it 75 staff  
21 members who?

22 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: 175 staff members. Is that  
24 an adequate number of staffing for the increase of  
25 applicants?

3 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: We're getting back to the  
4 prepandemic number, so I feel pretty comfortable that

5 -

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, you're good with the 175  
7 number?

8 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: It's meeting the need that  
9 we have.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay and then would like to  
11 know if you have any specific recommended amendments  
12 to Intro. 909?

13 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I guess in terms of that, we  
14 would just like to work with better understanding of  
15 some of like for instance the training just to go  
16 hand and hand and have those discussions offline, in  
17 terms of as we work towards these being in place.  
18 Just better understanding how they would be implement  
19 timelines, these type of things. We could have those  
20 discussions at a later point.

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Great, thank you. Now, I'll  
22 move to DCWP on Intro. 569, which would create an  
23 immigrant workers bill of rights and while many  
24 federal, state and local labor protections apply to  
25 workers of all immigrant statuses, most immigrants  
are not aware of this fact, which leaves the

3 vulnerable to various forms of exploitation. This  
4 bill of rights would compile all of these protections  
5 into a synced document that employers would be  
6 required to distribute to all of their workers  
7 annually. The bill of rights would also be required  
8 to be conspicuously displayed in physical workplaces  
9 and also included in digital workplaces, such as the  
10 work facing side of apps. Equipping immigrant  
11 workers with knowledge of their rights will allow  
12 them to exercise them when violations occur.

13 Additionally, we hope that this will dissuade  
14 employers from committing the violations in the first  
15 place. Can you clarify the CWP's position on Intro.  
16 909?

17 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yes, thank you Council Member. I  
18 think to reiterate a point that you made in your  
19 statement, I would say for DCBP, all of our  
20 protections, all of our services that are available  
21 to New Yorkers regardless of their immigration status  
22 and certainly we support the intent of the  
23 legislation in terms of getting this valuable  
24 information on workers' rights to all New Yorkers,  
25 especially our newest New Yorkers. I would say we do  
have certain concerns with the legislation,

2 particularly around the posting and signage  
3 requirements. But I think again, the intent is very  
4 much something we're align with and want to work with  
5 the Council on and I'm happy to walk through some of  
6 those concerns if it's helpful to.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: That would be great. I'd  
8 love to learn a little bit more about what those  
9 concerns are.

10 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, I think, so one I think,  
11 something we definitely want to make sure, we're not  
12 creating the perception of any separate tiers of  
13 protection. I mean, it's very important for us that  
14 New Yorkers know that these rights are rights that  
15 enforce are available to you regardless of status. I  
16 do think that there are difficulties with creating  
17 legal signage requirements around other levels of  
18 jurisdiction. For example, the state or the federal  
19 governments. In particular, if those other levels of  
20 jurisdiction have duplicative signage requirements,  
21 for example, like a minimum wage situation. I would  
22 also note, I think from our perspective in terms of  
23 providing legal advice around immigrant issues or  
24 immigration services, I think that's also something  
25 that you know, we're not necessarily the experts in

3 and we would work more closely with our sister  
4 agencies on that. But those are, I think those are  
5 some of the things that we can definitely work  
6 through and ultimately the goal that I think we all  
7 share is about getting this information to the hands  
8 of New Yorkers.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Do you all have  
10 recommendations for amendments?

11 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think we would certainly like to  
12 work with the Council on tackling some of those  
13 signage requirements and figuring out how we make  
14 them - whether they are necessary or how we make them  
15 perhaps more useful rather than duplicative of  
16 current existing signage requirements.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: While I understand the  
18 nuances you've just shared around the signage and the  
19 sort of tiers of government and putting aside one  
20 group of workers and sort of making it look like  
21 there are tiered workers, could you share what work  
22 the DCWP is currently doing to stop immigrant workers  
23 from having their labor rights violated?

24 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yes, I think while generally we  
25 could tackle it from two perspective, one if the  
26 outreach and one is the enforcement. With respect to



3 work focused events, you know over the past year,  
4 we've done about 270 worker focused events serving  
5 18,000 New Yorkers. Many of those you know at those  
6 events, many of those New Yorkers are immigrant or  
7 from an immigrant background.

8 On the other side of enforcement, you know this  
9 past year was one of the I guess Hallmark years of  
10 worker rights protection in New York City. We were  
11 able to secure about \$23 million in restitution for  
12 New Yorkers and we were also able to secure about  
13 \$1.3 million in civil penalties against businesses  
14 for violating workers' rights.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it and then so to  
16 clarify, the way in which you reach immigrant workers  
17 is through these events and not necessarily through  
18 like direct workplace outreach. Is that true?

19 CARLOS ORTIZ: I would say we do; we have  
20 conducted direct workplace outreach. For example, we  
21 do business education days, which is when we partner  
22 with local bids and local Council Members to visit  
23 businesses door to door and make sure that they and  
24 the workers are educated about all the things that we  
25 do at DCBP. I certainly would love to conduct more

3 of those BEDs as we call them with your team and  
4 other folks on the dais as well.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: What does that stand for?

6 CARLOS ORTIZ: Business Education Day.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Business Education Day.

8 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah, so those are some of the  
9 direct workplace outreach we do. You know I think  
10 there's a different assortment of ways we connect  
11 with workers you know, we do presentations directly  
12 with worker organizations like the Workers Justice  
13 Project, I know you mentioned, work closely with  
14 unions. We have paid media campaigns every year as  
15 well. You might see them on like high visibility  
16 street furniture, encouraging folks to come to us.  
17 Ultimately we want people to know that DCWP is a  
18 resource that is here for all New Yorkers.

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood, so right now your  
20 materials are sort of branded in an all-workers  
21 model. That every worker is granted the same rights  
22 respective of -

23 CARLOS ORTIZ: I mean, I think we - I'm sorry to  
24 interrupt.

25 CHAIRPERSON ORTIZ: No, go for it.

3 CARLOS ORTIZ: That's correct and I think we're  
4 also very cognizant as well including the language  
5 regarding immigration status and communicating that  
6 for sure as well. You know our worker bill of  
7 rights, which is an existing document that we have;  
8 we've translated that into 15 different languages.  
9 We've also had it spoken into five different audio  
10 tapes as well for a particular language that don't  
11 have a written component. I think that speaks to how  
12 important for us as an agency that language access  
13 is, is meeting people where they are in ways that  
14 they're able to communicate with you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, what work does DCWP  
16 do to remedy labor violations of immigrant workers  
17 when they occur?

18 CARLOS ORTIZ: Uhm, I guess I'm not sure if I  
19 understand the question. Do you mean in terms of  
20 laws that we enforce?

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Laws that you enforce or if  
22 workers reach out. I mean, I remember handling cases  
23 around construction workers who were not paid for  
24 their work because there was no contract or if there  
25 was a contract and then the employer didn't adhere to  
this workers contract. So, that's like one case but

3 could you talk a little bit more about the scope of  
4 cases that you see from immigrant workers, limited  
5 English proficient workers?

6 CARLOS ORTIZ: Yeah of course. I would say in  
7 particular; I think the two principle laws that we  
8 might be enforcing that we do enforce, I'm sorry,  
9 that work that might be impacting immigrants is our  
10 paid, safe and Sick Leave law and our Fair Work Week  
11 law. In both those cases, you know we work closely  
12 to process or to investigate complaints judiciously  
13 and make sure that we're connecting with the workers  
14 and understanding the situation. Often times, we  
15 might use a workplace wide type of investigation to  
16 make sure that we're not necessarily singling anybody  
17 out and we're recognizing that probably if there's an  
18 issue effecting one worker, it's effecting very many  
19 workers. We're also very, it's very important to us  
20 also to make sure that retaliation is prevented or  
21 that if it does happen that we enforce against it as  
22 well.

23 When it's other things that are outside of our  
24 scope, like a minimum wage situation for example, we  
25 will worker with a worker to refer them to like DOL

3 for example and make sure that those cases get to the  
4 right authority.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it. And since asylum  
6 seekers began arriving in large numbers last year,  
7 has the department been working with asylum seekers?  
8 I know you're working with Workers Justice Project  
9 and other such organizations directly. Have you seen  
10 an increase in violations or cases coming to the  
11 department?

12 CARLOS ORTIZ: I would say I don't - I wouldn't  
13 say we've seen an increase based on that. But  
14 turning to the first part of your question, we have  
15 since the beginning of these asylum seekers coming to  
16 the city, we work very closely with our partners at  
17 MOIA to educate on all levels of our protections and  
18 services. So, there are of course, the worker  
19 protections, but there are the consumer protections  
20 and the financial services we provide, such as free  
21 financial counseling, free tax prep. We know these  
22 are components that I think would help build  
23 household budget over the course of many years and  
24 create more healthy financial situations.

25 I think perhaps what's happening right now is you  
know a lot of these folks have come in and there are

3 very difficult moments that probably have more  
4 immediate needs, such as shelter or such as income  
5 and that's probably what they're addressing first and  
6 you know through my colleagues work as well. But I  
7 think we stand ready of course to work with our city  
8 agencies just to assist asylees and to make sure that  
9 the city's response is holistic to any concerns that  
10 come up.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd like to push  
12 for urgency on immigrant specific workers bill of  
13 rights and while I understand the intent of ensuring  
14 that all workers have - all workers know that they  
15 have the same rights we have seen over and over from  
16 all of the various working class work sectors,  
17 particularly the delivery worker work sectors, those  
18 who are working in our groceries, local restaurants  
19 that immigrants workers are facing a different kind  
20 of harassment and exploitation and our office now  
21 very frequently is hearing from our Bangladeshi  
22 immigrant constituents around harassment taking place  
23 in the businesses that we love and we want to ensure  
24 that we're not creating an atmosphere that is pitting  
25 workers against one another, employer and employee  
against one another but that everyone knows that

3 they're all safe under protective laws in New York  
4 City. And so, I'm looking forward to a conversation  
5 following today's hearing to make a push for an  
6 immigrant specific workers bill of rights that would  
7 be visible to all workers and of course, really  
8 admire that the agency has prioritized language  
9 access and ensuring that the diversity of workers  
10 understand and know that the agency has their back.

11 I will now pass it over to Council Member Ung -

12 CARLOS ORTIZ: If I could just respond?

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Oh, yeah go ahead.

14 CARLOS ORTIZ: I think I want to just echo your  
15 statement as well of making sure that immigrant  
16 workers understand that there are no barriers, that  
17 there are no separate tiers and I think that's  
18 fundamental for us. I would also, would love to work  
19 with your office as well in figuring out other ways  
20 that we could reach these immigrant workers too and  
21 if there are particular cases that are coming to your  
22 office, I would - I will connect with your team as  
23 well to see what we can do on our end to make sure  
24 that we launch investigations as necessary. And with  
25 respect to harassment or discrimination, we can  
certainly connect with CCHR as well.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Council Member  
4 Ung.

5 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I just uhm, we've  
6 been joined by Council Member Brewer. I want to go  
7 back to IDNYC for a bit. So, IDNYC vans, I think  
8 they're great because I think they meet the community  
9 where they're at to get these cards. However, and my  
10 office has been trying to do this, it's been a  
11 backlog for a very long time. So, in fact, since  
12 I've took office, I've been trying to get this van  
13 and it has not worked out.

14 So, what is going on with that van and is there  
15 any way we can you know work together to make sure  
16 the process goes a little bit quicker?

17 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, there's not vans, it's  
18 one mobile command vehicle. It's about the size of a  
19 city bus and there is a large backlog. We had  
20 requests going back a number of years that  
21 individuals are pending and we are working to  
22 expedite every request in regards to that. We  
23 understand that there is a backlog and we know the  
24 need to kind of work with you know, to meet the  
25 community where they are at. And it's something that  
you know we continue to figure out ways to get the



3 mobile command vehicle out as much as possible. But  
4 we can always discuss other methods of trying to work  
5 with the community to get them access to IDNYC.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: So, how often are these command  
7 vehicles out every week?

8 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: The mobile command vehicle?

9 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Yes.

10 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Okay, the mobile command  
11 vehicle. It depends on the week but I can get exact  
12 numbers offline and provide them to your office.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Right, so I think the bottom  
14 line of my questioning is, is it because the command  
15 vehicle is in service every day? Is there enough  
16 staff for them to be in service every day or is there  
17 some other issues? I think that's really what I'm  
18 really getting at.

19 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Well, it does require a  
20 specific type of servicing, the MTC, it cannot be out  
21 every day but once again, I can get you some more  
22 information in terms of the schedule and how much  
23 we've been out offline.

24 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great and to the second part of  
25 what you just said about you know the command vehicle  
if there are other ways to work through this. So, I

3 have always approached; my office is happy to be a  
4 place where people can sign up. However, I've been  
5 told that there's an issue with the pictures because  
6 there's only, I don't know how many cameras out there  
7 are to take these pictures. And I think that's where  
8 I'm getting a little stuck at. So, while I think, I  
9 believe MOIA can be there to do the renewals online,  
10 but for any applicant who needs you know the first  
11 time, their first-time cards, I've been told that  
12 because there's only I think one photo- I don't know,  
13 a machine that takes these photographs that it's hard  
14 to have them around you know mobily. So, you know, I  
15 just want to try to get to the bottom of these  
16 issues.

16 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, your question in terms  
17 of there's not just one camera. Like, that's why I'm  
18 a little confused with the response that we can't be  
19 there because of a camera. Like, I don't believe  
20 there's any issues in terms of technology but what we  
21 can do is discuss further because I think what you're  
22 requesting is a popup site at your office.

23 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Yes, yes.

24 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: And so, what happens at  
25 times is trying to create accessibility. If there

3 are locations for IDNYC in the vicinity of your  
4 office, it's about trying to meet the community where  
5 they are at and trying to create access where the  
6 need is.

7 And so, that may have been a part of the decision  
8 but I wasn't involved in those discussions but I can  
9 circle back with your office and try to figure out  
10 exactly what has caused the delay and then we can  
11 discuss the possibility of a pop up.

12 CHAIRPERSON UNG: No, that would be great because  
13 it's something I've been offering for a very long  
14 time. I think my office is actually very centrally  
15 located, as I'm sure other City Council Members,  
16 elected officials, where I think the community feels  
17 it's a place they could trust to go to get this done.  
18 So, I think there should be ways where they could  
19 collaborate on this.

20 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Agree.

21 CHAIRPERSON UNG: And you know, I do have a  
22 second round of questions but I also want to give  
23 other Council Members an opportunity to ask questions  
24 right now. Council Member Brewer.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I  
have the same kind of questions. 790-A which is

3 saying that we need to include other kinds of ID, so  
4 that people can get the IDNYC, is that something that  
5 you support?

6 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: We agree with the intent of  
7 the bill and we are always looking for ways to make  
8 IDNYC more accessible for all New Yorkers. However,  
9 at the same time, we must work to examine and ensure  
10 the documents that we rely on to underpin IDNYC can  
11 be verified with the issuing institution and that we  
12 have confidence in the institutions ability and  
13 capacity to verify the identity of the individual.  
14 We are government issued ID and so, this has been the  
15 foundation of success for IDNYC. We're 1.5 million  
16 card holders in and it's about making sure that  
17 whatever you know, we're in alignment with that  
18 process and that that foundation remains there  
19 because that increases accessibility. That's how  
20 financial institutions -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: One is the feds, that  
22 hopefully we could get street vendor is City of New  
23 York. Arrest and Prosecution is city and state,  
24 maybe feds, same thing with jail, prison or detention  
25 and then someone from a legal service or social  
service, I think you could say in New York City,

3 which would probably be contracted by the City of New  
4 York. So, with the exception of the feds, it's 100  
5 percent New York City issued.

6 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: We examine each document,  
7 right, any request for a document. Through that  
8 process, have a discussion with the issuing agency.  
9 We just circle back and have discussions on how we  
10 could work together to increase the number of  
11 documents accepted in NYC.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I hear the answer. It  
13 makes me nuts but I'll listen to it. It's not my  
14 style. The other thing is, 175 people is what you  
15 said, so I think you have - I don't know if this is  
16 true. Last year, 239 budgeted positions. This year,  
17 210 but as of October of last year, it may be  
18 different, 150 only are filled and of course you got  
19 a cut from 19 to 16 million. So, when you say 175 is  
20 enough, not possibly enough.

21 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, when your saying, you're  
22 asking in terms of?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How many people -

24 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: No, no, how many people.  
25 So, I'm explaining that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, so ahead.

3 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Before the pandemic, we are  
4 reaching those numbers again.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: You're going to have  
6 more. You're going to have more. So, you need more  
7 but how come when you have 239 budgeted, that you  
8 only have 175. How many you actually filled of the  
9 175? Are they all filled, the 175?

10 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I will circle back with the  
11 exact number.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, because I don't  
13 understand if you have 239 budgeted, why you only  
14 have 175 people. I don't care whether it's before or  
15 after the pandemic, you need more people because none  
16 of us can get an ID.

17 I mean, I just went with, I have all the hotels,  
18 none of them can get ID's. That's what 400 or 500  
19 people right now in my district, 1,700 actually and  
20 then met yesterday with a whole bunch of immigrant  
21 advocates, Muslim, I don't know a whole bunch. None  
22 of them get an ID, none, zip and the school bus. We  
23 want the bus to come and I got 500 kids in the  
24 schools at least, maybe more because we have all the  
25 hotels and they come up from Midtown and we love  
every one of them, zero ID.

3 So, I'm missing something. If I have a family  
4 today and I want to get an ID, how long does it take?  
5 Maybe you answered this earlier, I was trying to  
6 listen.

7 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Yeah, depending on the, we  
8 do offer on a limited capacity walk-ins across all  
9 our sites. In terms of nobody can get the ID. Last  
10 year, we processed -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know but I'm talking  
12 about right now, today.

13 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I understand. I'm saying in  
14 2022, we processed nearly 95,000 applicants.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I actually have 90-

16 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: 90,000 ID cards.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have 97, I know you  
18 said -

19 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: It was 94.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, DSS said something  
21 different.

22 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I know.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They're wrong and you're  
24 right?

25 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: No, I'm telling you the  
number is 94,000.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so why is it so  
4 hard to get one now? Just is it the backlog? What  
5 is the challenge? Is it staffing?

6 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I think it's demand. I  
7 think that we -

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know but if you have  
9 enough staff then you can meet the demand. Is that a  
10 correct statement? I know OMB says no more people  
11 can be hired in the City of New York. I totally  
12 disagree with that when services are needed. I'm  
13 adamant on this topic. Crazy on this topic and if  
14 you had some hybrid, you could even hire more people.  
15 That's the Mayor. So, my question is, how many more  
16 staff do you need to make the opportunity to get an  
17 ID in a reasonable period of time? That's my  
18 question.

19 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: We can have those  
20 discussions offline because I cannot provide an  
21 estimate in terms of that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so what you're  
23 saying now, if I'm a family in a hotel in Manhattan,  
24 how long would it take me, forget the walk-ins. If I  
25 walk in, will I ever get an ID? Walk in to 49<sup>th</sup>  
Street.



3 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: We have plenty of New  
4 Yorkers that have gotten an ID the same day.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but how long does  
6 it take?

7 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: It depends on the site and  
8 the capacity of the site in terms of when are you  
9 going to the site to get an IDNYC card? Like, you're  
10 asking me a question of I go to one specific site -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: 49<sup>th</sup> Street.

12 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Alright if you go to 49<sup>th</sup>  
13 Street. I don't know how many folks are at 49<sup>th</sup>  
14 Street right now. So, its capacity that shows up  
15 there on the scenes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, I'm not going to  
17 argue with you. I'm just telling you, we've all been  
18 trying to get more ID's because there is no other  
19 working paper because of the friggen New York  
20 congressional folks will not give us, humanitarian or  
21 TPF. I've been working on it for a year, screaming,  
22 yelling. So has the Mayor, so has everybody,  
23 nothing. So, the only thing we have is this ID,  
24 that's it.

25 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: I understand.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so we need it. So,  
4 if you need more staff, somebody should say we need  
5 more staff if that's what it is but you can't wait  
6 six months to get an ID. That doesn't work. Because  
7 I'm really - this is something that should be so  
8 basic. There's so many other issues that these  
9 amazing families have. The least that New York City  
10 can do is offer an ID. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Council Member  
12 Avilés.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Thank you Chair. I was  
14 curious about following along the lines of Council  
15 Member Brewer's questions. What is the metric of  
16 success in terms of the turnaround for the ID?

17 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Generally, when someone is  
18 processed, they get the card within 10-14 business  
19 days. If the card is approved.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: From the moment of  
21 processing or the moment of application.

22 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Yeah, from the moment of  
23 applying for an IDNY card, roughly 10-14 days.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: And what is it right now  
25 on average? How long is it taking from the time of  
application?

3 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: When they enroll, it's 10-14  
4 business days.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Okay, so it's just  
6 getting the appointment that we seem to have big  
7 problems with?

8 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: At times, yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Yeah, I come from a  
10 district that we can't get appointments either.  
11 They're like months and months away. People just  
12 give up, yeah.

13 In terms of - can you provide the Council with a  
14 breakdown of the number of applications you get from  
15 the various sites and that particular focus. I hear  
16 your responding to Council Member Brewer that you  
17 don't know what it is depending on the location. So,  
18 I know for a community like ours, it seems very stuck  
19 or perhaps rather our demand is not being met. Our  
20 needs are not being met because of insufficient  
21 capacity to be able to set up appointments and get  
22 them done in a timely fashion for the demand in our  
23 community. So, it would be great to have that  
24 information broken down.

25 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: So, the specific information  
you want is how many -

3 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: I would like to know –  
4 you responded to Council Member Brewer that you know  
5 each site is different and you couldn't quite tell  
6 her how things were materializing depending on the  
7 specific site, so I'd like you to provide to the  
8 Council a breakdown of all those sites and the  
9 activity and their performance, and whether they're  
10 meeting the metrics.

11 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Okay.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Chair, I'm sorry.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Continue.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Can I ask, does MOIA  
15 staff provide training to DHS staff and/or providers  
16 at shelters housing migrants?

17 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thank you for the question. We  
18 don't actually provide training but we do work very  
19 closely with our sister agencies to identify need in  
20 also resources. You know, what we have done – I can  
21 speak about the navigation center particularly, we  
22 have been able to work very closely with DOHMH to  
23 provide specific training to staff there and we have  
24 invited other staff from other agencies as well that  
25 are currently at the navigation center. And not  
physically at the navigation center to join these

3 framings in terms of like, understanding trauma and  
4 how to service folks on that and we have you know –

5 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: I'm sorry to interrupt  
6 you. Just, I'm asking specifically about the shelter  
7 sites that are run either by DHS or because they  
8 don't have a provider or a nonprofit provider. Does  
9 MOIA provide any sort of guidance or training to  
10 those sites?

11 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Not directly but we do  
12 collaborate with them to identify you know resources  
13 that we can connect them with to fill that need.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: So, what kind of  
15 resources are you offering to a site?

16 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: So, we connect on the legal  
17 services that we can connect folks to. We provide  
18 information about all other services that are  
19 provided throughout the city and also, not only to  
20 city agencies but also with our partner you know  
21 community-based organizations as well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: So, does the agency –  
23 does MOIA check in on any of the emergency shelters  
24 that are housing migrants ever to check in to see how  
25 they're doing and how services are being provided?

3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Yeah, we have you know a strong  
4 you know relationship with the shelters and we  
5 connect on services, things that -

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: Do you talk to the  
7 migrants in the facilities actually?

8 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: The Commissioner has made you  
9 know a few visits. We have done that. Also, a lot  
10 of the migrants we see at the Navigation Center, as  
11 well as the satellite site. So, we do have many  
12 different touch points throughout the city where you  
13 know we come across them. And also, our outreach  
14 team is constantly out and about in the city whether  
15 it be at CBOs events and they do come across folks  
16 you know throughout these events and we do also visit  
17 satellite sites in terms of getting an invitation to  
18 their scheduled events so that we can have that  
19 touchpoint directly.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÈS: So, I think it's  
21 important to acknowledge that I understand that your  
22 role is not to oversee DHS facilities right? That's  
23 not what you were set up to do but you do have some  
24 of the cultural competence, right? In terms of  
25 engaging with this community and engaging in  
culturally competent ways. I will tell you from

3 direct experience of the facilities in my district  
4 and certainly stories from across, there is still a  
5 very serious lack of cultural competency around  
6 engaging with the migrant community. And a real lack  
7 of oversight and resources around that, that we as a  
8 city need to figure out how to support and ensure  
9 that we retain accountability to ensure that folks  
10 are being provided the most adequate level of  
11 services.

12 So, I think what I'm pointing out here is I know  
13 MOIA has made a grand effort and certainly is out in  
14 many communities certainly in mine but there is a gap  
15 with what we're seeing DHS shelters. And certainly  
16 some DHS providers on having cultural competency to  
17 engage properly with this community, including just  
18 giving misinformation that I think is a real problem  
19 that needs to be addressed. So, just for the record,  
20 thank you.

21 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you Council Member Ung.

23 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. I'm now going to  
24 move onto the Immigration Legal Services, I'm not  
25 sure whose answer it is, but has the \$5 million from  
the RFP for Legal Services been used?

3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thank you so much for the  
4 question. So, as you know the Administration did  
5 allocate the \$5 million. We're very close to  
6 finalizing the program model in order to be able to  
7 make it public. So, as soon as it's ready we'll roll  
8 it out and you know thus far, what we have done in  
9 collaboration with partners, we have been able to  
10 provide more than 4,000 asylum seekers with legal  
11 orientations at various touchpoints, satellite sites,  
12 the HERCs Navigation Center. We have also piloted  
13 more than five screen asylum seeker application  
14 assistance events and also clinics to be able to  
15 support folks with these applications.

16 And also, if I can add, you know the city has  
17 existing legal immigration services such as Action  
18 NYC and other city funded programs that have provided  
19 thousands of individuals with legal assistance for  
20 asylum cases and many others as well. So, you know,  
21 even though we have seen that support through already  
22 existing services that the city has had for years.

23 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, but the \$5 million RFP  
24 has not been out.  
25



3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Well, that was - no, we're  
4 still finalizing the model and it will out very soon.  
5 And as soon as it is, we'll share that with you.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, I think we're all looking  
7 forward to that. So, speaking of immigration  
8 assistance, you know to apply for asylum actually is  
9 a very long and intensive you know, immigration  
10 providers who does this, it really does take a long  
11 time. It's not one, two, three, lets fill out you  
12 know application. So, in light of that, you know  
13 there are many immigration legal service providers  
14 that do this service and they have been receiving  
15 city funding, discretionary funds for the City  
16 Council Members and they have highlighted issues such  
17 as insufficient funding. So, have MOIA and HRA met  
18 with providers to discuss any recommendations to  
19 really help these legal service providers in terms of  
20 funding or anything else?

21 I mean it is really, these asylum applications as  
22 someone who has practiced in this area of law before,  
23 it is very, very intensive. So, has there been any  
24 discussions between your agencies to see how we could  
25 help these legal service providers?

3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Well, yeah, MOIA and HRA are  
4 aware right of legal providers called for additional  
5 funding. We're assessing at the moment internally.  
6 And of course, I mean we will continue to work with  
7 existing contractors to understand the need. You  
8 know our office directly oversees Action NYC and our  
9 team is in constant communication with those  
10 providers to understand the challenge as well. But  
11 currently MOIA and HRA are you know assessing  
12 eternally.

13 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great and is there like a  
14 number? Is there any sort of extra funding, funding  
15 that you already assessed so far of what's needed or  
16 that's still under discussion?

17 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: It's still under discussion you  
18 know as we have said previously and I know the Mayor  
19 as well as our Commissioner has been very vocal that  
20 you know this is a very large need right. So, the  
21 city alone cannot meet the demand, right and we  
22 continue to call upon the state and federal  
23 government to provide financial support for not only  
24 this need but many of the needs that the asylum  
25 seekers you know have.

3 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you. So, on November 30<sup>th</sup>  
4 Governor Hochul announced a \$3 million that would be  
5 administered over three years by the New York State  
6 Office of New Americans to provide free immigrant  
7 legal services and assistance with application filing  
8 and appearances. Has MOIA received a copy of this  
9 procurement?

10 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Not that I'm aware of but I can  
11 circle back on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great and just if you know have  
13 any of the \$3 million funding from the State of  
14 Office of New Americans been administered for legal  
15 services? I realize this is not your agency but have  
16 there been any communications with the State of New  
17 Americans Office?

18 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I mean, we don't have any  
19 information specifically in the \$3 million but we do  
20 collaborate closely with the state you know this  
21 effort and are in constant communication with them.

22 CHAIRPERSON UNG: What has been the  
23 communications with MOIA and the State Office of New  
24 Americans in regards to this issue?  
25

3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I mean, you know the needs, I  
4 can't discuss the details but the conversations are  
5 ongoing.

6 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Great, thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I'd like  
8 to continue on this conversation about legal  
9 services. Could you share in total in Fiscal 2023,  
10 how much the Admin spent on immigration legal  
11 services?

12 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thus far, you know we'll be  
13 happy to discuss in detail at a later point. You  
14 know especially in our upcoming budget hearing. I  
15 don't have those numbers in front of me.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, no worries, I  
17 appreciate the honesty. And what about the amount  
18 for spending on Immigration Legal Services for asylum  
19 seekers? Because I know we've been talking about the  
20 \$5 million for some time now, so I am excited that  
21 there's going to be a roll out. Exciting that it has  
22 a nice acronym. Are you able to share how much was  
23 spent outside of the \$5 million?

24 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Not yet.  
25

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, and is MOIA or DSS,  
4 HRA, OCJ tracking the number of asylum seekers who  
5 have received legal aid?

6 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I mean, it's - folks you know  
7 have there's many different touchpoints. I know I  
8 can speak directly to the navigation center. We do  
9 have a legal immigration space there that folks can  
10 get information in orientation and we do tally the  
11 folks that do get the service there. I don't have  
12 the specific number with me today but I'm happy to  
13 follow up on that. And I know like you know folks  
14 you know have provided - you know we have also  
15 provided you know pilot clinics as well as events  
16 that we can get you more information on that.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood, so right now,  
18 it's safe to say that you all are collecting that  
19 data of how many asylum seekers are receiving legal  
20 aid, whether that's through the navigation center,  
21 the satellite sites, and I know some of the HERCs  
22 also have those services or shelters have - are you  
23 all making sure that there's a unified sort of  
24 streamlined way of collecting this information?

25 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I mean, we continue to work  
closely on you know we progressively tracking all of

3 these services. Some of this data is also collected  
4 by our providers. So, we are making sure that that  
5 we are a united front and make sure that we have all  
6 of that information.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I'll definitely be revisiting  
8 some of these questions for the executive budget  
9 hearing, so I look forward to more concrete details.  
10 MOIA representatives in the past have said that the  
11 city is interested in using a pro se model, which you  
12 were hinting at to help asylum seekers complete their  
13 applications. Has the city created an RFP or  
14 contracted with any legal aid providers to conduct  
15 pro se clinics for asylum seekers?

16 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I can't speak to that at the  
17 moment but you know once we have more information on  
18 that, we'll do that. But that's an interest of us to  
19 have that, to be able to set up that.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Got it, great. We are  
21 looking forward to understanding more about the pro  
22 se clinics and I'm sure we will be hearing some  
23 testimony around it as well.

24 What existing city contracts with legal aid  
25 providers are there that provide legal immigration  
services to asylum seekers?

3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I mean, currently you know the  
4 city has Action NYC. There's also the various  
5 immigration legal services that are housed under HRA  
6 that are available for all New Yorkers, including our  
7 newest arrivals. We have the MOIA hotline as well.  
8 There's also - we also provide information about  
9 state funded immigration legal services through ONA  
10 as well. So, you know, so those are also ongoing  
11 services that folks can and have been reaching out  
12 to.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, how long does it  
14 take to get an appointment? If right now an asylum  
15 seeker is at the navigation center, are they given an  
16 appointment two weeks out or the appointment they  
17 have at the navigation center their appointment for  
18 the legal services opportunities?

19 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: So, for the navigation center,  
20 we have now you know at the very beginning of the  
21 navigation center we were appointment based but very  
22 quickly we worked around - we have been a walk-in  
23 center. One of the services that is available at the  
24 navigation center is our legal orientation services  
25 there and any folks that are able to be seen on that  
date will have the option to meet with someone to

3 talk about their cases, get general information about  
4 the process. Get all of the information that they  
5 need to not only reach out to Action NYC but all  
6 other services available and you know and connect  
7 them that way.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: So, what's the timeline? If  
9 I right now want to see an attorney, what's the  
10 estimated time for an asylum seeker?

11 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I don't have that information  
12 right now but you know I can look into that and  
13 again, like these are also services that are renter  
14 by buyer vendors and we're happy to follow up on that  
15 specifically.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: This is especially important  
17 because this is what I hear about most from the  
18 emergency shelters that are in my district and of  
19 course we get calls and emails from providers as  
20 well. It's just that the capacity issues but also  
21 the referral model isn't working because there aren't  
22 appointments and so, without ensuring that asylum  
23 seekers are meeting with attorneys that are able to  
24 begin their application process, in time the amount  
25 of time that they have allotted to do so, we are  
playing a role as a city in expediting a generation



3 of undocumented people. And so, I am in anxiety  
4 thinking about my newest constituents, our city's  
5 newest New Yorkers about this very dead – very tight  
6 deadline that they have to apply to become asylum  
7 seekers and so, would love to just better understand  
8 right now with the infrastructure that exists,  
9 whether it's the Action NYC and all these other  
10 opportunities that have existed before the surge of  
11 asylum seekers in our city, and now with the creation  
12 of the navigation center and the satellite offices,  
13 it is imperative for us to make sure that the  
14 touchpoint for legal services isn't a three month,  
15 four month, six month wait to actually begin an  
16 application process.

16 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Yes, very valid. You know we  
17 feel the same way. You know we continue to have  
18 regular conversations with providers about legal  
19 services, the capacity of course it's an issue.  
20 We're aware of that. You know, we're also you know  
21 as you mentioned earlier right, the pro se clinics  
22 would be definitely a model that will help us you  
23 know get this information out to folks accordingly.  
24 You know, in a timely manner as well and make these  
25 services accessible.

3 I also would like to add that you know, being  
4 that capacity is an issue, like you know, we have, we  
5 continue to call on the state and federal government  
6 to support you know on funding to be able to increase  
7 the availability of services as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood and then, for the  
9 providers for the organizations that are at the  
10 navigation center or the one's right now overseeing  
11 the satellite sites, could you describe MOIA's role  
12 in collecting the data of how many asylum seekers  
13 have shown up for services and what kind of services?  
14 How are you all keeping that data and how is that  
15 helping MOIA sort of understand the scale of how to  
16 increase specific services and the call for more  
17 funding?

18 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Yeah, currently we do collect  
19 data in terms of the number of folks that are walking  
20 into the center, the type of service that they are  
21 getting whether it be you know legal orientation,  
22 IDNYC, or they're meeting with the Department of  
23 Education. We do have that and we identified that  
24 information and then share it you know with the city.  
25 We aggravate it and share it with the city.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I see. Okay, I'm going to  
4 raise this again during the exec to for a better  
5 breakdown of the way in which MOIA is really  
6 spearheading this infrastructure, which will need to  
7 grow as we see more asylum seekers and welcome them.  
8 And you know I'm really curious and I was asking, I  
9 was getting to this but didn't ask more explicitly,  
10 is the city tracking asylum seekers dates of arrival?

11 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I don't have that information  
12 right now.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And that's why I was getting  
14 at this because there's that one-year deadline to  
15 apply. And I think that's getting really left out of  
16 the conversation here. There isn't an indefinite  
17 unlimited amount of time that someone seeking asylum  
18 has to apply for asylum. And so, that is really  
19 critical and we must be prioritizing that there is a  
20 finite amount of time that one has to apply and if  
21 they miss that timeline, they have no pathway. They  
22 have no pathway in our country and that's why  
23 recognizing that we cannot, we must refuse that what  
24 will happen is that this community will become a  
25 generation of undocumented New Yorkers.

3 And then, want to know and I think we'll get more  
4 into this if, are there any of my – none of my  
5 colleagues are here but I know that the legal  
6 services bit is really what's top of mind for all of  
7 us and again, to know that there will be a rollout  
8 soon about how the \$5 million is being allocated on  
9 legal services. Will the city be tracking the way in  
10 which this program will reach asylum seekers in  
11 ensuring they have adequate, equitable legal  
12 services?

13 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I can't really speak much about  
14 it because we're still in conversations but as soon  
15 as it's rolled out, we'll be able to share more info.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And is this being rolled out  
17 as a MOIA initiative or MOIA program?

18 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: It is going to be overseen by  
19 our office.

20 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, great that's good to  
21 know. And I'd like to know what the MOIA's position  
22 is on Intro. 839, the Office of Refuge and Migrant  
23 Settlement? Because I know that the Mayor shared  
24 that there will be an office of asylum seeker?  
25 Office of Asylum Seekers?

3 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Office of Asylum Seeker  
4 Operations.

5 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Operations, that's the word.

6 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Well, given that announcement,  
7 right, we will continue to work with City Council and  
8 others as you as the development of the office  
9 continues.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Could you repeat that one  
11 more time?

12 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: So, given the Mayor's  
13 announcement on the Office of Asylum Seeker  
14 Operations, you know we'll continue to work with City  
15 Council as you know, as the development of this  
16 office continues.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Are you able to provide any  
18 information at this time about the office?

19 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: I don't have much details just  
20 yet, we're still uh, the Administration is working to  
21 still figure out the way that it's going to be  
22 operationalized but the office will serve at the  
23 centralized point of coordination for the city's  
24 existing asylum seeker welcome and support operations  
25 including existing and new workstreams across agency  
partners and ensure that agencies have the resources

3 they need to continue to do this work. We will also  
4 manage the city's continued advocacy with state and  
5 federal government.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Understood and I know we are  
7 waiting for this rollout of OFLAN. Could you share  
8 when? Could you share the timeline with us?

9 YASNIYA SANCHEZ: Very soon.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, Council Member Ung, do  
11 you have any follow-ups to that?

12 CHAIRPERSON UNG: I actually, this is not a  
13 question but this is the comment I have since you're  
14 talking about legal providers and how important it is  
15 that these asylum seekers need legal providers as  
16 soon as possible. In New York City, we do have a lot  
17 of law schools and it's maybe I don't know if it's  
18 something MOIA has thought of in the past, maybe  
19 something to really think about partnering with law  
20 schools. I know a lot of law schools in New York  
21 State definitely has immigration clinic and maybe it  
22 wasn't as robust as before but definitely now is time  
23 maybe to seek out these clinics and see if there's a  
24 way we could connect these asylum seekers to these  
25 legal clinics as a way to get the application as

1  
2 Chair Hanif has said. There is a timeline on this or  
3 at least to get the application started.

4 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thank you. Yes, that's  
5 important. And uhm, you know yes, this is - we have  
6 thought about that. We are in conversations with  
7 multiple schools you know to be able to you know to  
8 get them involved in this as well. More information  
9 to come very soon.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Just give us a few minutes to  
11 review the final questions. We are almost at the end  
12 of Admin questions.

13 Okay, that's it for questions of questions for  
14 the Admin. Thank you so much.

15 JASNIYA SANCHEZ: Thank you very much.

16 DR. ALBERT GAMARRA: Thank you.

17 CARLOS ORTIZ: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Take care.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, we will now be moving to  
20 public testimony. If you could give us a few minutes  
21 for the Administration to wrap up and we will begin  
22 calling witnesses for the public testimony.

23 For public witnesses, once your name is called,  
24 if you are joining us via Zoom, a member of our staff  
25 will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will give

3 you the queue to go ahead and begin your testimony  
4 after setting the timer. So, please listen out for  
5 that. For fairness of everyone testifying today, all  
6 public testimony will be limited to two minutes per  
7 person. When the Sergeant announces that your two  
8 minutes is up, we ask that you please wrap up your  
9 comments and we can move onto the next person.

10 Please note, we do have a pretty long list of public  
11 witnesses today, so we do ask that you try to limit  
12 your comments to the two minutes. And please note,  
13 you can submit any written testimony up to 72 hours  
14 after the hearing at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

15 And if you wish to testify and you have not yet  
16 filled out a slip and you are in Council Chambers,  
17 please speak to one of the Sergeants at Arms so you  
18 can take care of that.

19 I will now call the first panel of witnesses.  
20 First we have Assembly Member Kenny Burgos followed  
21 by Darly Corneil, Funmi Akinlawonu, Shayna Kessler  
22 and Sierra Kraft. And I apologize if I killed  
23 anyone's name.

24 Assembly Member, you can go ahead when the  
25 Sergeants call time.



3 KENNY BURGOS: Sorry, I couldn't unmute before.

4 Here we are. Chairperson Hanif, Chairperson Ung,  
5 thank you so much for this opportunity to testify  
6 before you on this important resolution.

7 So, as you know Assembly Bill 568 would prohibit  
8 employers from using the employment verification  
9 system, also known as e-verify to check employment  
10 authorization status of a current or perspective  
11 employee. Now, while employers in New York State are  
12 not required to use e-verify, they can still  
13 voluntarily use this program and this bill would  
14 prohibit municipalities, cities or towns from passing  
15 ordinances requiring employers to use the e-verify  
16 system.

17 By using this system to check employment  
18 authorization status, has only created space for  
19 prejudice and implicit bias towards an already  
20 marginalized community that contributes so much  
21 extensive labor and growth in our communities.  
22 Statistics show that as recently as 2021, immigrants  
23 made up more than a quarter of a total income  
24 contribution for New York's Growth Domestic Product  
25 or GDP. Showing their vital importance to our  
economy. The obstacles for immigrant New Yorkers who

3 are seeking employment are often tedious and gruesome  
4 and they represent one of the largest immigrant  
5 communities in the country. These are circumstances  
6 that are unfortunately the harsh reality for the  
7 majority of the people who migrate to our state.  
8 Passing this bill lifts a critical barrier that would  
9 increase job opportunities for immigrants who are  
10 just trying to create a better livelihood.

11 Finally, similar legislation has been enacted in  
12 the State of Illinois which is already that this can  
13 be extremely fruitful to our society. Furthermore,  
14 I'm proud to share that assembly bill 568 has the  
15 backing of the labors union and I'm grateful for  
16 their support and I want to thank Senator Jessica  
17 Ramos for being a great partner and a champion for  
18 this bill in the Senate and I must thank my Council  
19 Member Amanda Fariàs for introducing this Resolution  
20 in support of A568. I look forward to working with  
21 my colleagues to pass this critical piece of  
22 legislation over the final weeks of this legislative  
23 session.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you. Now,  
25 we'll move to Darly Corniel. You can start when the  
Sergeants call time.

3 DARLY CORNIEL: Thank you. Thank you for the  
4 opportunity to testify before the Committee today.  
5 The Consortium for Worker Education, the training arm  
6 of the New York City Central Labor Council, supports  
7 the Immigrant Worker Bill of Rights. The CWE  
8 commends Council Member Hanif for moving legislation  
9 that lifts up and provides dignity and respect to our  
10 most vulnerable workers. CWE intention is to be a  
11 partner in the implementation of this bill. This  
12 bill is critical to our immigrant communities as it  
13 affirms the educational work that CWE and our  
14 partners are doing around immigrant rights.

15 The bill deeply impact the recent influx of  
16 asylum seekers and recently arrived migrants bused to  
17 New York City from other states. CWE created the  
18 Immigration Protection Group, a collective of  
19 partners offering a vast array of immigration  
20 services in 2018 as a response to the anti-immigrant  
21 executive orders put in place by the Trump  
22 administration.

23 The IPG strategizes how to address the needs of  
24 our immigrant communities, shares resources and  
25 bridges gaps in worker training. Some of our partners  
are here today. Our focus would be to ensure that

3 bill is implemented with feedback from our partners  
4 and it becomes an essential part of our core  
5 curricula. To further ensure the success of the bill  
6 we recommend. One, informational posters or ads  
7 about the bill should be placed in public  
8 transportation in several languages. Two, the bill  
9 explicitly details workers' rights to unionize and to  
10 ensure that immigrant workers are aware that  
11 organizing and concerted activity efforts are legally  
12 protected no matter their immigration status. Three,  
13 there should be references as to how the bill will be  
14 enforced and how workers are protected by it. For  
15 instance, workers have the right to report their  
16 employer's lack of compliance with the bill without  
17 fear of retaliation.

18 Our recommendations on the bill are based upon  
19 the work we support with our partners. For instance,  
20 through the CWE's Know Your Rights program, our  
21 partner Make the Road New York,— Thank you. It was  
22 just an explanation of what we do of the education  
23 and services and immigration services that we provide  
24 with our partner, which you will have the full  
25 testimony in writing soon after. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

3 SHAYNA KESSLER: Good afternoon. Thank you very  
4 much Chairpersons Ung and Hanif. I'm Shayna Kessler,  
5 I'm the State Advocacy Manager with the Vera  
6 Institute of Justice and I am testifying today in  
7 favor of Resolution Number 556 calling for passage in  
8 Albany of the Access to Representation Act with ARA  
9 this year. I also urge continued and increased  
10 investments for the New York City funded immigration  
11 legal services programs like the Pioneering New York  
12 Immigrant Family Unity Project and others.

13 At the Vera Institute, one of our core priorities  
14 is to advance universal representation so that no  
15 immigrant is forced to face the prospect of detention  
16 and deportation without legal help. The access to  
17 representation act would establish a right to  
18 representation in New York for people at risk of  
19 deportation. It would promote family unity, economic  
20 stability and strong communities.

21 As cynical politicians treat immigrants seeking  
22 refuge as political pawns, and as the federal  
23 government continues to threaten immigrant families,  
24 New York can lead the way by passing the ARA.  
25 Immigrants facing deportation confront the highest of  
stakes yet they are not guaranteed a lawyer if they

3 cannot afford to hire one even though the data  
4 clearly shows that legal representation makes a huge  
5 difference. These programs bring critical benefits  
6 to the city, more than half of all New York City  
7 children have an immigrant parent. Nearly half of  
8 the New York City's workforce is foreign born and  
9 immigrants own nearly half of all small businesses in  
10 the city.

11 But legal services programs have long been  
12 stretched to their limit, as you've been discussing  
13 already today. Unable to meet the need. Over 70,000  
14 people are currently in immigration court in the  
15 State of New York without legal help and so, support  
16 of the Access to Representation Act is critical,  
17 along with New York City's continued leadership and  
18 continued investments in immigration legal services,  
19 the ARA will build long term stability so that  
20 neither newly arriving immigrants nor long term  
21 neighbors will be forced to navigate this daunting  
22 immigration court system on their own.

23 So, we very much encourage the adoption of  
24 Resolution 556 and thank you so much for your time  
25 today.

3 FUNMI AKINNAWONU: Hello, my name is Funmi  
4 Akinnawonu, I'm the Advocacy and Policy Manager at  
5 Immigrant ARC, an organization that works on access  
6 to counsel and access to justice issues for immigrant  
7 New Yorkers and I'm here. I'm pleased to offer my  
8 testimony in support of the joint Resolution urging  
9 the passage of the Access to Representation Act.  
10 Immigrant ARC is part of the Care for Immigrant  
11 Families coalition that has been advocating for an  
12 increase in immigration legal services funding as  
13 along with the passage of the Access to  
14 Representation Act because there is a crisis in  
15 immigration representation here in the State of New  
16 York. And unfortunately the backlog in immigration  
17 court is over 200,000 cases with as you know my  
18 colleague mentioned over 70,000 of those cases being  
19 unrepresented.

20 This means that individuals who face potential  
21 persecution, death or abuse if deported as along with  
22 separation from their families if deported are facing  
23 the prospect of deportation against an experience to  
24 government attorney without representation. And the  
25 consequences of this are incredibly serious. We know  
that those who are detained, the difference in

3 outcomes for those who have representation versus  
4 those who don't is 21 percent have success in  
5 immigration court versus two percent and those who  
6 are undetained, 60 percent of immigrants have success  
7 in immigration court when represented versus 17  
8 percent.

9 New York is very lucky to have a dedicated  
10 immigration services bar who unfortunately are over  
11 capacity and this is leading to thousands of  
12 immigrants being turned away because there is no one  
13 to provide representation. The Access to  
14 Representation Act would solve this by creating an  
15 infrastructure and a stream of funding that allow  
16 immigration legal service providers to take on cases  
17 and to be able to serve immigrants over the course of  
18 the many years that it will take their cases to be  
19 fully adjudicated. So, thank you so much for  
20 considering this important resolution.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and we will move to  
22 Sierra Kraft who is present on Zoom. Sierra, you can  
23 go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

25 SIERRA KRAFT: Good afternoon, thank you to the  
Committee on Immigration for inviting testimony and



3 for this conversation today. My name is Sierra  
4 Kraft, and I am the Executive Director at ICARE.  
5 ICARE is a coalition of legal services organizations  
6 that provides free representation to unaccompanied  
7 immigrant children facing deportation in New York  
8 City with the ultimate goal of universal access to  
9 counsel.

10 Since 2014, support from City Council has made it  
11 possible for ICARE providers to stand alongside over  
12 11,000 young immigrants and defend them from  
13 deportation, empower them to become leaders of  
14 tomorrow. And legal representation has been truly  
15 lifechanging in the lives of many of these young New  
16 Yorkers. I'm here on behalf of the coalition to  
17 express our support for Resolution 364, the  
18 Children's Safe Welcome Act.

19 This bill represents a critical opportunity to  
20 prioritize the well-being and best interests of  
21 children both in federal immigration custody and  
22 ensuring they can thrive once released and living in  
23 New York City. The U.S. immigration system was  
24 designed with only adults in mind and while children  
25 in other government systems have an established set  
of safeguards, including legal support when needed,

3 immigrant children only have a patchwork of modest  
4 and rudimentary protections. And these gaps have  
5 profoundly harmed thousands of children for decades.

6 And over the past decade, immigrant children,  
7 both unaccompanied and children arriving with parents  
8 or legal guardians, have continued to arrive to the  
9 U.S. despite the presidential change in  
10 administrations and increasing punitive policies  
11 intended to deter migration.

12 These children are some of the world's most  
13 vulnerable groups and any of the children we  
14 represent, are escaping extreme violence and trauma  
15 in their home countries in search of safety and  
16 protection in the U.S. Yet too often after surviving  
17 their dangerous journey, children routinely  
18 experience harm while in government custody. And it  
19 is past time to ensure that children in our care are  
20 protected from dangers and offered resources and  
21 supports they need to survive. So, a few key  
22 provisions in this bill include: Guaranteeing legal  
23 representation for unaccompanied children at every  
24 stage of -

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 SIERRA KRAFT: At removal proceedings. I'll  
4 submit the rest of my testimony but thank you so much  
5 for hearing me out and ensuring that we live our  
6 values as a sanctuary city.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I have a question  
8 for Darly. Could you share what you're hearing from  
9 workers or on some of the ways in which they're  
10 experiencing harassment or exploitation in the  
11 workplace and I love the additions of ensuring that  
12 the campaign reaches all public institutions,  
13 including our public transportation and the coverage  
14 of making it known that workers have the right to  
15 unionize. So, definitely will be looking into some  
16 of those recommendations but could you expand on what  
17 worker exploitation is looking like right now?

18 DARLY CORNIEL: Sure. According to some of these  
19 things that we at least hear from our partner who  
20 provided direct services, wage stealing is a big one.  
21 Those who don't have the appropriate documentation to  
22 report back or to simply stay in a job because they  
23 are afraid that if they leave, they will be  
24 retaliated against or they have the information where  
25 they are staying and Immigration is being called on  
them.

3 So, this kind of thing makes it difficult for  
4 people to come forward and actually you know demand  
5 or convey what is likely happening on the workplace.  
6 Safety issues are huge, especially in the nonunion  
7 construction industry, where there is not necessarily  
8 the training required for people to be on work site.  
9 And we know construction is difficult. Construction  
10 is dangerous, so to allow these kind of things to  
11 happen and the work and not feeling protected by us  
12 or the city as a whole is heartbreaking. So, those  
13 are some of the things that we hear. Working over  
14 time without getting paid, which is another way to  
15 wage theft. It's a very common one that we continue  
16 to hear from partners.

17 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And does your organization  
18 host workshops for these workers to better understand  
19 what their rights are and do you feel that these  
20 conversations alleviate and make them more aware of  
21 the fact that they do in fact have rights and  
22 protections here?

23 DARLY CORNIEL: We have our great partner Make  
24 the Road. We support them to Know Your Rights and  
25 it's interesting because when we first started this  
26 journey, it was in 2018 and we were providing the

3 direct services and at some point obviously one  
4 organization couldn't provide all. We started Train  
5 the Trainers to convey what are the rights of  
6 workers. As things change because immigration always  
7 had this [01:41:30] the Know Your Right is actually  
8 why it's needed. So, Make the Road make sure that  
9 this information is provided when they hold workshops  
10 as well as New York Community for Change. It is  
11 about making sure that our workers understand what is  
12 at stake for them. What they have the right to and  
13 what they are not supposed to be enduring just  
14 because they are undocumented.

15 So, we do provide a lot of education that our ESL  
16 classes, many of our partners include those pieces  
17 within the curriculum and as a way to help our  
18 students who are many of them are immigrants and or  
19 undocumented longstanding New Yorker, to see that  
20 they are protected regardless of immigration status.  
21 That they are workers who have rights and those  
22 rights should be respected.

23 So, we do mega effort on that. We try also to  
24 pass along information to help them out. We convene  
25 to discuss what is going on and how we can avoid the  
view that was in our last meeting of seeing new

immigrants against the old established immigrant.

3 There is now the need to – I think in some ways the  
4 city portrays that when some services are only  
5 available for new immigrants, so those who have been  
6 here undocumented for a longer period of time, so  
7 they don't have the same rights.

8 So, we try to really convey a unified message  
9 that we are on this together, resources are there to  
10 be shared and we all have the same rights.

11 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: And then, are you also  
12 hearing about workers interaction with the police?  
13 We have heard incidences of police confiscating bikes  
14 of delivery workers and that's a huge concern,  
15 particularly those who are undocumented or asylum  
16 seekers. Could you speak a little bit more about  
17 just workers interactions with police?

18 DARLY CORNIEL: In general, that's one that is  
19 pretty new. I had a couple of my colleagues and  
20 partners mention that recently and it was a little  
21 bit of a shock but also, I live in Community District  
22 12, which we have big issues on those and one of the  
23 things that we are hearing is that the Council is  
24 trying to work with the police to help them  
25 understand that we do not want to take away a

3 livelihood out of workers who are in the low-wage  
4 worker delivery workers.

5 So, I haven't heard so much about that but we  
6 started, you know it usually takes a little, sometime  
7 to get the information to them but the moment that we  
8 get to the bottom of that, we will also be working  
9 with our partner. We have really, because we don't  
10 necessarily provide direct the services, we compile  
11 information with our partners and then go into what  
12 is going on and how can we be of help to them and the  
13 workers.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you and now I'd just  
15 like to know a little bit more from Funmi. Could you  
16 share why Access to Representation Act is so urgent,  
17 particularly as we've said over and over that there  
18 are nearly 60,000 asylum seekers and both Council  
19 Member Ung and I were talking about this one-year  
20 deadline, this time period that and asylum seeker has  
21 to apply for the application. Could you share the  
22 urgency of ARA?

23 FUNMI AKINNAWONU: Sure, of course. As you've  
24 mentioned, especially given that there are many  
25 immigration processes that are already time  
sensitive, asylum being one of them, without access

3 to Council, immigrants will be entering into an  
4 incredibly complex, incredibly important process  
5 without assistance. And because we understand that  
6 the differences in outcomes for those who are able to  
7 assisted versus those who are not are so staggering,  
8 it's really essential to have the Access to  
9 Representation Act not only provide the funding for  
10 immigration legal services, but to create the  
11 advisory committee that is ensuring that these  
12 services are going to get to the communities that  
13 need them the most and creating that sort of long-  
14 term infrastructure, along with the right to counsel  
15 that will enable legal service providers to actually  
16 be able to as a practical matter, take on cases and  
17 understand that they have the means and the resources  
18 to see those cases to fruition.

19 And kind of touching on the point that Council  
20 Member Ung brought up before about partnering with  
21 legal clinics within law schools to potentially  
22 provide immigration legal service funding, the ARA  
23 actually contemplates this and that's why the  
24 infrastructure piece of this legislation is so  
25 vitally important, is trying to create a pipeline of  
immigrant legal service providers by creating



3 fellowships in law schools, by investing in clinics  
4 and ensuring that New York State can really not just  
5 create the right to counsel but actually be able to  
6 implement it and create and once again be a leader in  
7 modeling what excellent immigration legal services  
8 delivery actually like.

9 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. No more questions  
10 for this panel.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now call  
12 the next panel. We have Arielle Wisbaum, Viany  
13 Romero Mendez, Noely Reyes, and Deana Foley(SP?).

14 And again, if you are present in the room and  
15 wish to testify and have not yet filled out a slip,  
16 please make sure to do so. Even if you registered in  
17 advance online, please make sure to see the Sergeant  
18 at Arms to fill out a witness slip.

19 Arielle, you can go first whenever you're ready  
20 and the Sergeants call time.

21 ARIELLE WISBAUM: Thank you Council Members. My  
22 name is Arielle Wisbaum, I am an Immigration Staff  
23 Attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.  
24 Specifically I work in the UndocuCare program, and I  
25 serve immigrant New Yorkers who are transgender,  
gender-nonconforming or intersex and also those who

3 are living with HIV. I want to thank the Chairs  
4 today for offering the opportunity to present  
5 testimony, advocating for the needs of the asylum  
6 seekers that we particularly work with. NYLPI is in  
7 support of the Council's Resolution to support the  
8 Access Representation Act and several other Intro.'s  
9 on today's agenda, including 909 and 790, which  
10 increases access to gender affirming identification  
11 documents through IDNYC, health care and crucial  
12 legal services. All of these Intro.'s will bring us  
13 closer to serving the needs of immigrant New Yorkers.

14 While we elaborate on these bills further in  
15 written testimony, I want to focus today's time to  
16 describe the limited resources in the Human Resources  
17 Administration, HRA that has created terrible  
18 barriers for asylum seekers that may be eligible for  
19 public benefits programs. So, through working with  
20 our clients at NYLPI, we've seen that several HRA  
21 employees engage in practices of diversion in which  
22 they may illegally discourage asylum seekers who may  
23 already be eligible for certain public benefits  
24 programs like State Medicaid, for benefits through  
25 HASA. They may be requiring documentation that is  
not in fact required, such as a Social Security

3 Number, a Green Card. None of these are necessarily  
4 indicators of someone's eligibility for public  
5 benefits programs.

6 And so, since as recently of January of this  
7 year, at least two of the asylum seekers that we  
8 represent have been denied case workers through the  
9 HASA program, which is managed by HRA and the reason  
10 that they're provided with staffing issues. And so,  
11 we just want to acknowledge that these issues are  
12 exacerbating the trauma that asylum seekers face when  
13 they could be receiving health care and housing  
14 services. Thank you very much.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

16 NOELY REYES: Good afternoon, my name is Noely  
17 Reyes. I'm representing Mixteca organization and the  
18 community we serve. Thank you Committee Chairperson  
19 Shahana Hanif and Council Members present.

20 We are here to testify to support Bill Intro.  
21 909, a local law that would enhance the IDNYC  
22 process. Mixteca provides supports to Latinx and  
23 indigenous communities in Sunset Park and greater New  
24 York City.

25 As a daughter of immigrant parents who arrived to  
the U.S. to seek a better life opportunity for their

3 family, with no guidance or support on where to  
4 start, if when they arrived there were organizations  
5 like Mixteca that provide many different services to  
6 newly arrived to help assist their needs and guide  
7 them like with health care, education opportunities  
8 or job readiness, then their path start up a  
9 lifestyle in the U.S. could have been easier for  
10 them.

11 Mixteca has been at the forefront responding to  
12 the humanitarian crisis of newly arrived asylum  
13 seekers from different parts of Latin America, who  
14 have come to settle in New York City and Long Island.  
15 Being a well-established community-based organization  
16 in Brooklyn, we have established a strong bond with  
17 the existing and new community members in the  
18 surrounding areas and across the city. This enables  
19 us to foster trust with new arrivals effectively.

20 As a sole Spanish speaking organization in  
21 Brooklyn that caters to asylum seekers, our team of  
22 staff and volunteers provide culturally sensitive  
23 assistance in Spanish. Our support ensures that the  
24 recent asylum seekers are informed about their rights  
25 and can access available resources including  
essentials such as clothing, food and toiletries.

3 Mixteca is currently assisting families living in  
4 shelters in District 38 and 39 and surrounding areas,  
5 as well as throughout some other cities. On a weekly  
6 basis, we have served around 50 to 60 individuals  
7 during our support tables, where we dedicate time to  
8 community members with specific needs in applying for  
9 public benefits including obtaining appointments for  
10 IDNYC.

11 Due to the increased demand, we had to extend our  
12 days for support tables in order to meet the needs of  
13 the community members for IDNYC assistance and other  
14 public services. And I will submit the rest of my  
15 testimony.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I assume we are  
18 not having another witness from Mixteca here? We  
19 will now move to Deana Foley(SP?) who will be joining  
20 us via Zoom.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 DIANA FOLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Diana  
23 Foley(SP?), I am a Social Worker in the Immigrant  
24 Community Action Project at Brooklyn Defender  
25 Services. Thank you to the Committees, Chair Hanif  
and Chair Ung for inviting us to testify today.

3 Brooklyn Defenders Immigration practice protects  
4 the rights of immigrant New Yorkers by defending  
5 against ICE detention and deportation, minimizing the  
6 negative immigration consequences of criminal and  
7 family charges for noncitizens and representing  
8 immigrants and applications for release.

9 We're grateful to the Council for its investment  
10 and ensuring immigrant communities have access to  
11 full legal representation in complex cases through  
12 NYIFUP and the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative.

13 In my limited time, I'd like to highlight the  
14 importance of IDNYC for immigrant New Yorkers. ID is  
15 crucial for New Yorkers seeking to access city  
16 benefits, employment, health care, for immigration  
17 applications, and the ability to travel to city  
18 safely without fear of being penalized by law  
19 enforcement for lack of ID.

20 For asylum seekers, government issued ID is a  
21 requirement for being able to apply for the ability  
22 to legally work and to access critical social  
23 services. Asylum applicants, even minors, are only  
24 eligible to apply for a safety net assistance if they  
25 have work authorization, which requires valid ID to  
obtain. We're grateful to Council Member Hanif and

3 Council Member Brewer for introducing legislation to  
4 increase access to IDNYC. Intro. 909 will increase  
5 access to IDNYC by codifying walk-in appointments,  
6 requiring additional training for staff and allowing  
7 applicants to appeal a denial.

8 I was glad to hear from HRA earlier the walk-in  
9 appointments are now available but the only  
10 information I could find on the website is that walk-  
11 in appointments will be reviewed by IDNYC staff and  
12 based on staff discretion, if there's not enough room  
13 to process applicants on the date of their walk-in,  
14 they'll be given an appointment at another date.

15 While this is a step forward from having no walk-in  
16 appointments available, discretionary denial is not  
17 an effective walk-in system.

18 It's been our experience that people are often  
19 unable to find an appointment through the portal,  
20 which can be complicated to use with appointments  
21 often difficult to search for, unavailable and  
22 sometimes inexplicably cancelled. You can't search  
23 for the soonest available appointment but must enter  
24 individual dates and time until you find an  
25 appointment.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

4 DIANA FOLEY: I'll submit the rest of my  
5 testimony in written form, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I have a question for Noely.  
7 Could you talk a little bit more about the work that  
8 Mixteca has done as a satellite site? Like the scope  
9 services and how many people Mixteca is serving right  
10 now?

11 NOELY REYES: Yes, so estimate Mixteca from  
12 September of 2022 when asylum seekers have arrived.  
13 Approximately 1,200 or 1,400 Committee Members we  
14 have served and in specifically with asylum seekers  
15 we supported with clothing, toiletry and if it  
16 relates to our four pillars, which would be  
17 education, mental health, health and immigration  
18 services. So, for we've helped with ESL in order for  
19 them to slowly start navigating the city,  
20 understanding English. We've supported with that.  
21 Health NYC Care, one of the public benefits but as  
22 well IDNYC, their identification and many of them  
23 don't have any identification documents with them  
24 because it is taken from them, so that's why we  
25 encourage for IDNYC enrollment centers to expand  
their locations, walk-in availabilities it is at



3 capacity for most centers. And specifically Brooklyn  
4 only has like I believe five enrollment centers and  
5 it's going to be at capacity. And we have mental  
6 health offers one on one services with community  
7 members. You know sometimes it can be a toll for  
8 them to arrive to New York City and not know how to  
9 navigate the city and as for our immigration team, we  
10 try to let the community members know what's Know  
11 Your Rights. We have pamphlets actually that we try  
12 to give out every time we do outreach. So, they know  
13 what is their rights as newly arrived to New York  
14 City.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you, I've been deeply  
16 grateful for Mixteca's work, especially in my  
17 district and the coverage and I understand the  
18 tremendous challenges, capacity challenges, funding  
19 issues, and staff capacity to be able to really  
20 service our newest neighbors, so just deep grate-  
21 extending my deep gratitude and excited to continue  
22 working together for a city that is ensuring dignity  
23 to all New Yorkers, so thank you.

24 NOELY REYES: Thank you. No more questions for  
25 this panel.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll call the  
4 next panel. We have Henry Love, Lorena Carosias (SP?)  
5 and Harold Solis.

6 You can go ahead when the Sergeants are ready  
7 with the timer.

8 DR. HENRY LOVE: Thank you Chair Hanif and Chair  
9 Ung and esteemed members of the Committee on  
10 Immigration and the Committee on Governmental  
11 Operations for the opportunity to submit testimony.  
12 My name is Dr. Henry Love and I'm the Vice President  
13 of Policy and Planning and Win.

14 Win is the nation's largest homeless organization  
15 dedicated to serving families with children. Each  
16 night we serve more than 6,500 people, including  
17 3,600 children. Each night we serve more than 6,500  
18 people including 3,600 children.

19 As the immigration crisis grown in New York, so  
20 has the homelessness crisis. Currently Win has over  
21 200 asylum seeking families that came last year in  
22 our care. And currently one-third of our clients are  
23 immigrants.

24 Clients are coming here as a matter of life and  
25 death. We've had several clients come to us and tell  
us that a mother only had tortilla with salt and

3 sometimes not even that or that she on her way here  
4 was threatened to be killed and her children were  
5 being killed.

6 So, in response to that, we have to increase our  
7 funding for our providers like Win. We've spent over  
8 \$1 million today on supporting these families,  
9 including things like chickens and refrigerators,  
10 laundry, haircuts. Things as children providers  
11 don't usually do. Win supports Resolution number 532  
12 for Governor Hochul to declare an emergency and  
13 direct funds to asylum seekers. We also ask FEMA to  
14 award \$650 million to reimbursement and we support  
15 Resolution 365 sponsored by Council Member Brewer to  
16 prompt the U.S. Department of Health and Human  
17 Services to prioritize refuge settlement resources to  
18 New York.

19 In addition, we are asking for more legal  
20 representation in improving immigration proceedings.  
21 To help these families, Win actually started a  
22 program called LEAD Legal Empowerment for Asylum and  
23 Displaced Families. We've helped over 70 families so  
24 far begin the application process and this unique  
25 collaboration approach between law firms, nonprofits,

3 conserve as a program model for the future to help  
4 many, many families.

5 In closing, we are also advocating to expedite  
6 the immigration process with the passage in congress  
7 of the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act of 2023  
8 and I'll yield there.

9 HAROLD SOLIS: Good afternoon. My name is Harold  
10 Solis and I'm an Attorney and the Co-Legal Director  
11 at Make the Road New York. Make the Road is the  
12 largest grassroots immigrant led organization in New  
13 York with a membership of over 25,000 New Yorkers.  
14 We provide health, legal, education and survival  
15 services while also organizing our communities to  
16 innovate policies that improve their lives.

17 My testimony today will focus mostly on some of  
18 the pieces of legislation that the Committee is  
19 considering but given today's topic, namely how the  
20 city can continue to meet the needs of asylum  
21 seekers, I wanted to reiterate the need for a  
22 meaningful investment in immigration legal services.  
23 Our organization along with many of our other allies  
24 and partners have been working around the clock the  
25 assist the city's newest residents, often with little  
to no additional funding. And while maintaining

3 representation of thousands of existing clients. To  
4 ensure communities have what they need to protect  
5 themselves against deportation now and into the  
6 future, it is critical that the city substantially  
7 increase funding somewhere around at least \$50  
8 million for legal immigration services beyond just  
9 screenings.

10 For similar reasons, we urge the Council to pass  
11 Resolution 556, which calls on the State Legislature  
12 to pass the Access to Representation Act. Together,  
13 these initiatives will ensure that legal service  
14 providers and our communities have what they need to  
15 support our immigrant communities.

16 We also want to share our support for Resolutions  
17 307, 364, 365, 381, and 532-A. All of these  
18 Resolutions recognize the needs and humanity of  
19 asylum seekers. The spotlight the need for  
20 employment authorization, care and codify standards  
21 to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of migrant  
22 children at the heart of these resolutions is the  
23 simple but undeniable premise that a person be it a  
24 child or an adult, should not be penalized for  
25 seeking refuge in our society.

3 I want to end just by thanking the Council for  
4 confronting the issues that have been raised today  
5 and for considering the bills and resolutions that  
6 we've been discussing this afternoon. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you so much. I've been  
8 really impressed by the work that Win has done to  
9 expedite a very necessary service to asylum seekers  
10 and was proud to go in on one of those days that you  
11 all had the clinic and I mean \$1 million is a lot of  
12 money and we have been going back and forth with the  
13 Admin around their \$5 million allocation and so, Win  
14 alone for how many families did you say?

15 DR. HENRY LOVE: Roughly a little over 200.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Over 200. \$1 million should  
17 give us an understanding that we need much more  
18 funding allocated for this urgent, urgent process.  
19 And so, grateful to see the ways in which you all  
20 have stepped up but of course, it wouldn't have been  
21 possible with this private public partnership and the  
22 will of you all in the Win organization but we know  
23 that there are smaller providers who would not be  
24 able to do this and want to do this. And so, we need  
25 a system that is supported by our Admin to ensure  
that everyone has legal services immediately and of

3 course with the passage of ARA, that would guarantee  
4 it. So, thank you so much for your amazing work and  
5 I'm just deeply proud to have you all in my district  
6 as well. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON UNG: And I also want to thank you  
8 for your work. I'll just ask you one quick question  
9 about your partnership of immigration law firm. I  
10 mean, how does that and you know when Admin was here,  
11 I did mention this. I mean, how does that workout.  
12 Do you think the space and experience is something  
13 that Admin can do to is to work with private law  
14 firms to get you know immigration help, which is  
15 really deeply needed right now.

16 DR. HENRY LOVE: Yes, absolutely and that's been  
17 our thinking. And so, this really began as just us  
18 as an organization working with NYLAG and recognizing  
19 there's a really huge issue and you know we're  
20 waiting for the city to do something to support these  
21 families and so, we decided that we're going to try  
22 to create a program to do that. And we were able to  
23 partner with a law firm that was able to provide pro  
24 bono counsel. And so, the model is essentially we do  
25 an ID clinic and getting all their information.

3 The second one is a screening clinic to determine  
4 if they actually have a strong case for asylum. And  
5 then the third one, if they move through the next one  
6 is to actually get the asylum application submitted.  
7 And then the fourth component is being able to  
8 support them through case management and what not  
9 throughout the immigration process. And the sort of  
10 way that it works is that Win sort of provides to the  
11 clients and make sure that they get there and all of  
12 the facilitation of the clinics. And then NYLAG is  
13 providing the expertise in the room who is kind of  
14 supervising those pro bono attorneys. But we hope  
15 that we can get more firms to do similar things and  
16 other immigration – other law groups nonprofits to be  
17 able to do a similar sort of situation.

18 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Thank you, so these private law  
19 firms actually – I know NYLAG is their expert on it  
20 but the NYLAG helping, supervising. Are these law  
21 firms able to carry out the case from beginning to  
22 end?

23 DR. HENRY LOVE: No, so they are only helping  
24 with the application process, as I think someone  
25 alluded earlier. You know, one of the big  
misconceptions that we've sort have been screaming



3 from the roof is that a lot of people haven't applied  
4 and it's a really complicated process and there's a  
5 lot of assumptions that people did apply. And so,  
6 for us we were trying to figure out how can we really  
7 have an impact with limited resources, with limited  
8 amounts of attorney's. And so, you know it's a real  
9 challenge for people to actually take the cases  
10 moving forward. So, for right now, the first step is  
11 at least getting peoples applications in before that  
12 one-year deadline, which is already starting to  
13 happen.

14 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, understood, so the law  
15 firm is able to start the application but if it gets  
16 more complicated than that, they will not be on the  
17 OB NYLAG I assume, who will be carrying that case  
18 forward.

19 DR. HENRY LOVE: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON UNG: Okay, thank you. I think this  
21 is a great model and I just would like maybe have  
22 deeper conversations about this to see how maybe you  
23 could expand the model. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you Council Member Ung.  
25 I thought that was a great question and I know this  
idea of pushing the Admin to look to a private public

3 partnership has been raised in the Chambers in the  
4 past by advocates. Thank you all.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll move on to  
6 the next panel. We have Maria Angela Gina Michu,  
7 Lauren Galloway, Bernadette Jentsch, and Ernie  
8 Collette.

9 LAUREN GALLOWAY: Okay, good afternoon. My name  
10 is Lauren Galloway and my pronouns are they and she  
11 and I'm the Advocacy Coordinator at the Coalition for  
12 Homeless Youth. CHY has advocated for the needs of  
13 runaway and homeless youth for 45 years and thank you  
14 to Chair Hanif and Ung for holding today's hearing as  
15 well as the other Council Members of Immigration and  
16 Government Operations. And also for the Council's  
17 ongoing support for runaway and homeless youth in New  
18 York City.

19 We will be submitting longer written testimony  
20 but I'd like to use this time to highlight what we  
21 believe are the most pressing issues regarding the  
22 needs of migrant youth and young adults. Data  
23 collection, runaway and homeless youth providers are  
24 feeling stuck and unsupported with how the needs of  
25 migrant youth are being documented. In order to flag  
those concerns, we need the data and although CHY is

3 collecting data through provider surveys, this does  
4 not replace the need to do so at a system level and  
5 the city agencies are currently not collecting data  
6 that truly captures the numbers despite CHY  
7 requesting that. So, we need the data collection  
8 first and then we need system collaboration.

9 So, runaway and homeless youth providers, most of  
10 whom are funded by DYCD have been experiencing an  
11 influx in unaccompanied migrant minors and youth  
12 since August of 2022. However, our calls to address  
13 these needs through policy and system collaboration  
14 have gone unanswered. Specifically, there is no  
15 current updated policy or guidance attached to DYCD,  
16 ACS or Health + Hospitals about how to support  
17 unaccompanied migrant minors who meet the definition  
18 of destitute.

19 In addition of the needs of these vulnerable  
20 populations, none of them were addressed in the  
21 Mayor's asylum-seeking plan. So, for DYCD there has  
22 been given no guidance for ACS. There also is no  
23 clear guidance attached the influx of the youth. In  
24 addition to the issues and getting into the  
25 children's center, we also have heard repeatedly from  
mutual aid groups that when they are trying to refer

3 you directly to the children centers, they are being  
4 turned away without any follow-up about what they are  
5 supposed to do.

6 And I definitely want this to be put on record.  
7 In light recently DYCD through ACS or sorry, ACS  
8 through DYCD requested information to give to ICE,  
9 which we refused to do but I need that to be put on  
10 record and I'll finish putting the rest of mine into  
11 written testimony. So, thank you for this time and  
12 our continued collaboration.

13 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

14 GINA MICHU: Good afternoon. My name is Gina  
15 Michu and I use pronouns, she, they. I am an  
16 Advocacy Fellow for the Coalition for Homeless Youth  
17 and a former member of the Youth Action Board of NYC.  
18 From age 21-25 I experienced chronic homelessness in  
19 the New York City Department of Homeless Services. I  
20 lost my work authorization through the troubled  
21 program DACA during a time when I fled my hometown on  
22 the West Coast because of severe trauma including  
23 failed navigation for legal services and resources  
24 through case management while under FTH's  
25 Transitional Independent Living Program in the Bronx.

3 I was two years old when I migrated from my home  
4 country Mexico. I experienced an education through  
5 the Los Angeles Unified School District from Pre-K to  
6 my senior year of high school. I obtained DACA  
7 status at 16 and became an advocate from immigration,  
8 social and environmental injustices through local Los  
9 Angeles nonprofit orgs during my youth and now in New  
10 York as young adult.

11 I am a fierce queer trans and undocumented  
12 identified young person because of my community led  
13 organizing and mobilizing. This is our need to be a  
14 valued advocate for fans, LGBTQI+ and BIPOC  
15 communities. I lived-in South-East Los Angeles on  
16 indigenous land most of my life. I want to recognize  
17 the sisters of the stolen that is occupied and that  
18 U.S. founders have terrorized and executed. Policies  
19 for immigrations began through a racist and insulate  
20 system which we continue to experience through labor  
21 and persecution. Immigration has been pushed back to  
22 the end of the agenda. It has yet to be a priority  
23 on the federal level leaving to support and work on  
24 local and state levels.

25 Today, I want to highlight my experience that  
young people fleeing their countries from

3 persecution, might miss out on like education work  
4 and independence. I would also like to add that I  
5 have personally visited the navigation center for  
6 seeking asylum, both the Mayor's plan with the Road  
7 Forward and the Navigation Center do not mention or  
8 service unaccompanied minors as well as no mention  
9 yet today on that population. By adding testimony on  
10 this, I will provide the rest on written testimony.  
11 Thank you.

12 BERNADETTE JANTSCH: Good afternoon and thank you  
13 for the opportunity to testify in support of Intro.  
14 569-A before your Committee. My name is Bernadette  
15 Jentsch and I am the Supervising Attorney in the  
16 Workplace Justice Project at Mobilization for  
17 Justice, which advocates on behalf of low-income and  
18 immigrant workers who are most vulnerable to  
19 exploitation.

20 In MFJ's experience, immigrants are likely to be  
21 unfamiliar with rights such as minimum wage and  
22 overtime premiums, sick and safe leave and  
23 prohibitions on discrimination. Through community  
24 education and individual consultations, MFJ seeks to  
25 empower the workers to assert the rights under the  
law. We also educate workers about what the law does

3 not require. While we recognize that many immigrants  
4 are small business owners, who may be familiar with  
5 the legal system from their home country which is  
6 different from the U.S. legal framework, their  
7 confusion and misinformation is the legal standard,  
8 sometimes lead to unproductive workplace conflicts.  
9 By creating and publishing an immigrant workers bill  
10 of rights containing information on the rights and  
11 protections under federal, state, and local laws that  
12 apply to all workers in the city regardless of  
13 immigration status, it would reduce labor violations  
14 and unnecessary disputes and litigation, allowing  
15 both the employers and the workers to focus on  
16 growing a successful and sustainable business and  
17 contributing to the economic life of the community.

18 This most appropriate that the Office of Labor  
19 Standards within the Department of Consumer and  
20 Worker Protection take the lead in creating and  
21 publishing this important work in coordination with  
22 the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the New  
23 York City Commission on Human Rights. The Office of  
24 Labor Standards has successfully created informative  
25 fact sheets that clearly explain the laws that they  
enforce and their outreach efforts, especially during

3 the height of the pandemic, was very helpful and much  
4 appreciated.

5 MFJ applauds the Committee on Immigration for  
6 holding this hearing and urges the Council to pass  
7 Intro. 569-A. Thank you.

8 ERNIE COLLETTE: Good afternoon and thank you  
9 very much to the Committee for allowing me to  
10 testify. My name is Ernie Collette, I'm the  
11 Supervising Attorney of the Immigration Law Project  
12 and Mobilization for Justice. While we applaud the  
13 City Council for working on measures aimed at  
14 assisting recently arrived immigrants in New York  
15 City, I'd like to draw attention to how these  
16 measures impact pressing client needs that my staff  
17 and I encounter daily.

18 We agree in principle with Local Law Intro 839 to  
19 establish an Office of Refugee and Migrant  
20 Settlement. Notwithstanding, the bill's proposal  
21 must provide "long-term" access to resources,  
22 specifically the proposed office's mission to connect  
23 individuals to appropriate legal services.  
24 Connecting individuals to non-profits, pro-se  
25 application preparation projects, and pro bono law  
firm relief clinics, to provide immediate, short-term



3 application assistance is necessary. But we now see  
4 frequent requests from prospective clients in terms  
5 of long-term representation. Many individuals are in  
6 removal proceedings with upcoming hearing dates and  
7 require counsel for complex asylum representation.

8 With many organizations throughout the city at  
9 capacity, the challenges that we face are multi-  
10 faceted and the proposals should likewise be multi-  
11 faceted, balancing the needs of recent arrivals with  
12 the needs of immigrants for long-term legal matters,  
13 which can take years to adjudicate and require  
14 continuous updates and preparation.

15 As Intro 532 mentions, our clients face  
16 adjudication backlogs of four and a half years or  
17 more, and there are currently 50,000 individuals in  
18 the city shelter systems. Resolution 365 states that  
19 20,000 Asylum seekers have already arrived in New  
20 York City, while Intro 532 anticipates an additional  
21 50,000 asylum seekers. Even if 20 percent of the  
22 anticipated asylum seekers have credible claims, this  
23 unprecedented number will require the attention of  
24 attorneys to review, prepare, and represent during  
25 the adjudicative process.

3 This does not even consider the humanitarian and  
4 family-based needs of our current clients, which also  
5 require time and investment to ensure proper  
6 representation. We applaud the City Council for  
7 supporting the Access to Representation Act,  
8 providing a legal right to counsel in immigration  
9 court proceedings. Any future pathways offered by  
10 the abovementioned bills should be accompanied by  
11 direct support from the Council to increase funds and  
12 create programs to allow for more representation, as  
13 the demand for these services will only continue to  
14 grow. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. I'd like to know  
16 a little bit more about asylum seeker youth and how  
17 you all are interacting or what you're learning.  
18 What this Council should be paying attention to.

19 GINA MICHU: Yeah, thank you so much. It was  
20 something I wanted to get to, so thank you for this  
21 question. And essentially what is happening is,  
22 because there's been no guidance from DYCD who funds  
23 the runaway and homeless youth shelters, really  
24 what's being mentioned a lot today is the legal  
25 services but really access to being able to work  
because a lot of the youth want to be able to work if

3 they can. And as the goal being permanent housing,  
4 if we don't have ways to be able to make and help  
5 folks meet those needs, there's a lot of barriers  
6 there. So, legal services, working permits, are  
7 being accessed to and then ultimately also  
8 translation and language access. They're not having  
9 staff on site that speak the languages therefore they  
10 can't even understand their needs. Can't begin to  
11 fill out housing applications and then also the  
12 language access lines are not user friendly or not  
13 really usable currently.

14 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you for that.

15 GINA MICHU: Yeah, thank you for the question.

16 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: No more questions.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll now move on  
18 to the next panel. We will call Rex Chen followed by  
19 Hyewon Byeon. I'm so sorry about that. Allison  
20 Cuttler, Deborah Lee and Mario Russell. Rex, you can  
21 go ahead when the Sergeants call time on Zoom.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 REX CHEN: My name is Rex Chen, I'm the  
24 Immigration Director at Legal Services NYC. My  
25 pronouns are he, him.

3 LSNYC provides free immigration legal services to  
4 thousands in New York City every year, including  
5 representing asylum seekers in Immigration Court.  
6 Providing support for Immigration Court  
7 representation is critical for asylum seekers. Many  
8 have valid asylum claims because they are fleeing  
9 persecution but the Immigration System does not make  
10 is easy for anyone to win asylum. There are complex  
11 forms, procedures and roles and it's hard for  
12 traumatized people to tell their stories. They'll  
13 often make inconsistent statements because of how  
14 trauma effects their memory and it's hard to explain  
15 this to immigration judges who often do not really  
16 grasp how the trauma is effecting peoples memory.

17 So, having a winnable asylum claim is not enough.  
18 Asylum seekers must also gather evidence, prepare to  
19 testify and make specific legal arguments to win.  
20 Their chances of winning the protection that they  
21 deserve increase dramatically if they have a lawyer  
22 to advocate for them. Workshops to help asylum  
23 seekers to start the ball rolling without a lawyer  
24 are helpful but they do not fully prepare them to  
25 actually win asylum at the final stage.

3 Lawyers, paralegals and especially social workers  
4 play very important roles to help them prepare and to  
5 win asylum and unfortunately, sometimes they are also  
6 critical to make appeals if an immigration judge  
7 improperly denies asylum. So, this importance of the  
8 full Immigration Court representation is very  
9 important and we ask that you keep this in mind as  
10 you review proposal and plans that you may be hearing  
11 very soon from the city. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
13 Hyewon Byeon. I am so sorry.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 HYEWON BYEON: Good afternoon Council members, my  
16 name is Hyewon Byeon, and I am a Law Clerk with  
17 Korean Community Services, KCS Immigration and Legal  
18 Services Department. Thank you very much to the New  
19 York City Council Committee on Immigration for  
20 holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to  
21 testify.

22 Last year, KCS established Immigration and Legal  
23 Services Department. KCS has transformed the  
24 previous legal service program from a small office  
25 filling out a few kinds of immigration applications  
to a full house offering various legal services. KCS

3 hired an Attorney, a Law Clerk, and a Case  
4 Coordinator for its immigration service program.  
5 This transformation has changed the breadth and depth  
6 of legal services, reputable still affordable,  
7 provided to Korean immigrants as well as other non-  
8 Korean community members in need of such services.

9 Before creating Immigration and Legal Services  
10 Department in last year, the Immigration Department  
11 assisted only Korean immigrants in filling out two  
12 immigration forms, Form N-400 (Application for  
13 Naturalization) and Form I-90, Application to Replace  
14 a Green Card. Currently, the Department files more  
15 than twenty-five immigration forms such as the  
16 Petition for Alien Relatives, application to Register  
17 Permanent Residence, application for Employment  
18 Authorization for the community.

19 In addition to the expansion of its immigration  
20 service, the Department started providing legal  
21 services in other areas. It offers initial  
22 consultations to the community members in the areas  
23 such as Domestic Relations, Contract, Property,  
24 Bankruptcy, Will & Trust, Health Care Proxy,  
25 Employment, Criminal Defense.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 HYEWON BYEON: As a result -

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You can submit  
5 written testimony, your full written testimony.

6 Next, we have Allison Cutler followed by Deborah Lee.

7 Allison, you can go ahead when the Sergeants call  
8 time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 ALLISON CUTTLER: Good afternoon and thank you to  
11 the Committees on Immigration and Governmental  
12 Operations for holding this hearing.

13 My name is Allison Cuttler, and I am a  
14 Supervising Attorney in the Immigrant Protection Unit  
15 at the New York Legal Assistance Group. A nonprofit  
16 organization that provides free legal services to  
17 low-income New Yorkers.

18 NYLAG, along with other legal service providers  
19 have engaged with newly arrived asylum seekers  
20 through our various community-based sites, at our  
21 central offices, the Asylum Resource Navigation  
22 Center, and through our latest partnership with the  
23 Pro Se Plus Project, which is a collaboration of  
24 several community based organizations designed to  
25 teach asylum seekers how to represent themselves and  
helps to ensure that important deadlines are not

3 missed by providing pro se application assistance and  
4 filing.

5 Through our work, we ask that the City Council  
6 support asylum seekers in the following ways: The  
7 first is to stop the criminalization and ICE  
8 surveillance of asylum seekers in New York City,  
9 which has caused a breakdown of existing ICE programs  
10 and further exacerbated the inability of the  
11 Immigration Court to process and schedule hearing,  
12 violating migrant New Yorkers due process right to  
13 fair hearing.

14 Second, we recommend City Council call on  
15 Congress and the Administration to create more  
16 pathways to employment authorization for asylum  
17 seekers who arrive at the border by redesignated  
18 Venezuela and TPS, granting two-year periods of  
19 parole to asylum seekers who arrive at the border and  
20 extending parole to recent migrants within the United  
21 States.

22 In addition to calling on USCIS to end EAD  
23 backlogs, we also recommend that City Council call on  
24 Congress to make asylum seekers eligible for EAD's as  
25 soon as they apply for asylum. Due to historic  
backlogs and the regulatory 150 day waiting period



3 for EAD eligibility, migrants who apply for asylum  
4 today will wait at least two years before finally  
5 achieving the ability to lawfully work.

6 Finally, the need for legal assistance and other  
7 support to this community is immense and we ask the  
8 City Council to call on the Governor to pass the  
9 Access to Representation Act, to increase funding for  
10 immigration legal services and community-based  
11 organizations working directly with newly arrived  
12 migrants.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 ALLISON CUTTLER: And again. I thank the Council  
15 for the opportunity to discuss these issues today.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will  
17 have Deborah Lee followed by Mario Russell. Deborah,  
18 you can go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 DEBORAH LEE: My name is Deborah Lee. I am the  
21 Attorney-in-Charge of the Immigration Law Unit at The  
22 Legal Aid Society. We thank Chairs Hanif and Ung for  
23 this hearing. Legal Aid remains concerned about the  
24 many needs of recent arrivals to New York. Our  
25 written testimony will include specific – will  
address specific posed resolutions and local laws.

3 I'll focus the oral testimony on highlighting Legal  
4 Aid's urgent needs.

5 While the city hopes that pro se application  
6 assistance clinics will help large numbers of people  
7 file for asylum like in the statutory one-year filing  
8 deadline. While the logistical reality is that for  
9 the over 50,000 recent arrivals this past year, the  
10 majority will not be reached by this limited scope  
11 triage model. While full representation immigration  
12 legal services is the best way to ensure successful  
13 immigration outcome, providers do not have the  
14 current capacity to meet the demand.

15 Recent arrivals are desperate to work and move  
16 out of shelters but they need work authorization in  
17 order to do so, which is generally only available if  
18 they file for asylum. For those who are already  
19 working, many are being exploited and trafficked.  
20 Given the limited pro se and full representation  
21 resources available and the scale of the need, recent  
22 arrivals who benefit most immediately for more legal  
23 education about their rights and remedies. This  
24 include information not only about immigration  
25 matters but also rights as workers.

3 We need to organize together better to  
4 disseminate information to recent arrivals. Legal  
5 Aid also knows that creative legal strategies are  
6 needed in this moment and wants to utilize impact  
7 litigation and federal advocacy to protect due  
8 process right for recent arrivals. We are concerned  
9 about the Department of Homeland Security failing to  
10 provide notice of the one-year filing deadline, USCIS  
11 family to accept jurisdiction over asylum  
12 applications for those not yet in immigration court  
13 proceedings and ICE failing to provide a transparent  
14 process for pro se individuals to change their  
15 address and reschedule check ins.

16 Impact litigation and federal advocacy could lead  
17 these agencies to reform the current practices. The  
18 challenges we face are daunting in their scale and  
19 complexity –

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 DEBORAH LEE: We look forward to partnering with  
22 the Council and the Administration. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I do not see  
24 Mario Russell in the Zoom room. So, that is the  
25 conclusion of this panel. Council Members, do you  
have any questions?

3 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I don't have any questions.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now move  
5 on to the next panel. We have Terry Lawson followed  
6 by Nilbia Coyotta(SP?), Armari Perez(SP?), and Shana  
7 McCormick(SP?). Terry, you can go ahead when the  
8 Sergeants call time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Terry is not present in the  
11 Zoom, so we will move on to Nilbia Coyotta. You can  
12 go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Hi, Nilbia? Do you need an  
15 interpreter? Nilbia?

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now. Hello, can  
17 you hear me?

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We are going to come back to  
19 Nilbia. Hopefully, she will realize we have called  
20 her. We will call Armari Perez. You can go ahead  
21 when the Sergeant calls time.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 ARMARI PEREZ: Good afternoon Chairwoman Shahana  
24 Hanif and the distinguished members of New York City  
25 Council Committee of Immigration.

3 On behalf of Workers Justice Project, WJP and  
4 your city organization that represents more than  
5 15,000-day laborers, delivery workers, and  
6 construction workers, I want to thank you for this  
7 opportunity to testify today about the importance of  
8 supporting immigrants, especially newly arrived with  
9 essential necessities the City can provide, such as  
10 training, identification and workers protection.

11 My name is Armari Perez and I'm from Venezuela  
12 and as an immigrant, I would like to be able to help  
13 and provide support to all of those who do their  
14 political and economic condition as our countries  
15 come to the U.S. looking for a better and condition.  
16 And currently health and safety monitor on their  
17 workers justice project and we want to thank day  
18 laborer workers initiative, low wage workers support  
19 initiative, construction sites safety initial data.

20 This initiative are the safety net of all  
21 immigrants of workers and especially for those who  
22 recently arrived who are [02:30:47] and they are  
23 experienced past abuse in the workplace. Through  
24 this initiative in FY22, we have been able to train  
25 more than 1,500 workers in construction site safety  
trainings and since August 2022 in our centers, we

3 have seen a significant growth of asylum seekers,  
4 seeking guidance, training and support.

5 Thanks to this initiative since July 2022, we  
6 have been able to train more than 1,000 in health and  
7 safety and provide Know Your Rights Workshops.

8 However, we have a long list of important 500 people  
9 waiting for training. We would like to connect  
10 immigrant workers to over 2,000 jobs and –

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 ARMARI PEREZ: We support initiative and we look  
13 forward to partnering with you in this [02:31:42].  
14 Thank you so much.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We can try Nilbia  
16 again.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Nope. It doesn't look like  
19 we're getting a response. Did you want to ask any  
20 questions Chair?

21 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: I had a question for Workers  
22 Justice Project. Earlier today, I asked about what  
23 kind of exploitation asylum seeker workers are  
24 experiencing and one that we've heard a lot about is  
25 that police are confiscating the cycles of delivery  
workers. Could you speak about what kind of

3 harassment delivery workers are experiencing and  
4 particularly those who are asylum seekers.

5 ARMARI PEREZ: At this time, I have no answer for  
6 that. I'm more in the field of construction workers,  
7 so I can get back to you with my supervisors and the  
8 Executive Director Leah, so she may can support you  
9 and answer that question.

10 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Okay, thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We'll move on to  
12 the next panel. We have Dafni Ramirez, Avaro Solis,  
13 Sebastian McGuire, Noah Elias Habeeb. Dafni, you can  
14 go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 DAFNI RAMIREZ: Good afternoon, my name is Dafni  
17 Ramirez. I'm a Social worker and also a program  
18 director of the Family Sanctuary Program at  
19 Volunteers of America Greater New York. I would like  
20 to thank Chair Hanif and Chair Ung and the respective  
21 members of each Committee for the opportunity to  
22 submit the following testimony.

23 BOA is an anti-poverty organization that aims to  
24 end homelessness in New York area by 2050 through  
25 housing, health and wealth building services. Today,  
I wish to focus on heartbeats, meaning people in need

3 as opposed to statistics. Two weeks ago, I received  
4 a call from the middle school that one of our  
5 residents son attend. The school social worker  
6 reported to us that the son, he's 12 years old had  
7 expressed suicidal ideations to his peers and his  
8 teachers.

9 This information was not only alarming, it was  
10 heartbreaking for the families that are experiencing  
11 trauma post their journey to the United States. Our  
12 team took immediate action and provided the family  
13 with a referral for mental health services and we  
14 continue to monitor the progress of the child by  
15 doing wellness checks on their room, in our shelter,  
16 however, this is not the first time our team has  
17 witnessed families experiencing psychological stress,  
18 anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress  
19 disorder. Mental health services are desperately  
20 needed or extremely limited to this population.

21 We'd like to thank Council Member Brewer for  
22 submitting Resolution 365, calling on the United  
23 States Department of Health and Human Services to  
24 prioritize refuge settlement resources to New York  
25 City.



3 We're humbly asking you to please allocate  
4 funding for mental health services. Thank you for  
5 the opportunity to testify and for your advocacy for  
6 asylum seekers.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
8 Avaro Solis followed Sebastian McGuire. Avaro, you  
9 can go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 AVARO SOLIS: My name is Avaro Solis, I am  
12 Director of Programs through Volunteers of America  
13 Greater New York. I would like to thank the members  
14 for giving me the opportunity to make the following  
15 testimony.

16 Volunteers of America Greater New York operates  
17 family shelters through all New York City. Our  
18 programs provide comprehensive services and safe  
19 housing for approximately 11,000 individuals and  
20 their children every day. Around 800 times our  
21 asylum seekers of those 800 asylum seekers, we've  
22 served [02:35:59] to new programs. As an agency,  
23 we're seeing clients from Africa, Ukraine, Russia,  
24 Turkey, South and Central America to mention some  
25 places.

3 These clients are not only concerned with what  
4 they left behind but what the present and the future  
5 look like. Long and dangerous journeys through  
6 poverty, political prosecution with ancestors are  
7 real and normally [02:36:21] an individual and  
8 collective trauma. Mental health services are key.  
9 The unclear future in the United States through its  
10 legal establishments create even more distress to our  
11 clients. Legal services to all asylum seekers are  
12 crucial. There are multiple challenges serving  
13 asylum seekers. It's not only the language that  
14 culturally eliminates as well.

15 Having bilingual staff has been instrumental for  
16 our clients navigating New York City, enrolling  
17 children in school, obtaining health insurance and a  
18 medical provider legal advice, all needed and  
19 important for our clients.

20 As an agency, we appreciate our partnerships with  
21 other nonprofit agencies, medical providers, with  
22 local politicians in government. With a board of  
23 education [02:37:04] - [02:37:06]. There is not  
24 enough mental health and legal services to assist  
25 most of the asylum seekers. You can help to solve  
this problem by increasing funding to provide legal

3 and mental health services for individuals and  
4 families seeking a better future for themselves and  
5 their children. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
7 Sebastian McGuire followed by Noah Elias Habeeb.  
8 Sebastian, you can go ahead when the Sergeants call  
9 time.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 SEBASTIAN MCGUIRE: My name is Sebastian McGuire  
12 and Seeking Asylum and Finding Empowerment is a New  
13 York City based organization dedicated to working  
14 with LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers. Historically in New  
15 York City including this Council has not prioritized  
16 the needs of this especially vulnerable segment of  
17 our immigrant communities. And there has been a  
18 tremendous need long before the current "migrant  
19 crisis." City funding has largely focused on  
20 relatively easy citizenship cases or on certain  
21 detained immigrants. Any provider will tell you that  
22 resources for asylum cases, especially affirmative  
23 cases, meaning the applicant is not in removal  
24 proceedings are severely lacking.

25 Without access to legal guidance and  
representation, asylum seekers often miss critical

3 deadlines for example. In addition to legal  
4 concerns, asylum seekers need assistance navigating  
5 housing, health care, education and everything else  
6 related to successful resettlement. All of these  
7 issues are interconnected. If an immigrant is  
8 worried about where they are going to sleep, then it  
9 is hard to focus on completing an asylum application.  
10 If an immigrant has not filed for asylum or a work  
11 permit, then it is going to be very hard for them to  
12 find anyone but the most exploitative employer.

13 For LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers, these challenges are  
14 often compounded by the lack of family, church and  
15 community support structures that are so critical for  
16 other immigrants. With timely and highly skilled  
17 support, asylum seekers can obtain work authorization  
18 and then eventually win their asylum cases. The sad  
19 fact is that so many asylum seekers miss the  
20 opportunity to access the information and services  
21 that could transform their lives for the better.

22 Underfunded providers have to scramble to meet  
23 the overwhelming need. It is simply impossible to  
24 meet this need on our own. Rather than defunding  
25 programs, including one of the city's premier pro se  
legal clinics, which the Council sadly did last year.

3 SAFE encourages you to back up your rhetoric with  
4 action by restoring and expanding funding where it is  
5 so desperately needed, especially for the most  
6 vulnerable including LGBTQI+ asylum seekers.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 SEBASTIAN MCGUIRE: Thank you. We are submitting  
9 written testimony with our comments on the specific  
10 pieces of legislation.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
12 Noah Elias Habeeb. You can go ahead when the  
13 Sergeants call time.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 NOAH HABEEH: Thank you. My name is Noah Habeeb  
16 and I am the Immigration Clinic Director at the Ark  
17 at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, known as CBST. I  
18 am glad to be here. CBST is the largest LGBT in  
19 world, a vibrant spiritual community and a  
20 progressive voice within Judaism. Our 50<sup>th</sup>  
21 Anniversary this year. Since 2019, we at the Ark at  
22 CBST have addressed the legal and other needs of  
23 primarily LGBTQ and HIV+ asylum seekers in the city.  
24 We do this through pro se clinics, a legal  
25 empowerment strategy to increase access to justice by  
providing asylum seekers who are not guaranteed the

3 right to counsel with services so that they can  
4 represent themselves in immigration proceedings. We  
5 provide this support to more than 1200 asylum seekers  
6 from over 50 countries who legal service providers  
7 are often unable to assist.

8 And our program relies on the trained volunteers,  
9 including over 1,000 New Yorkers, hundreds of law  
10 students in the city who provide case assistance  
11 under attorney supervision, as well as care and  
12 community support beyond legal needs.

13 So, we fully support the Resolution and support  
14 the Access to Representation Act. It would more  
15 fully address the needs [02:41:07].

16 I have a few comments in relation to the IDNYC  
17 program. It's of course made better to all New  
18 Yorkers especially for our asylum-seeking friends who  
19 often have had their identity stolen. [INAUDIBLE  
20 2:41:22]. But unfortunately, many people are unable  
21 to secure an IDNYC and it's difficult to get an  
22 appointment currently as well with the documentation  
23 list. For example, parolees, we find are often  
24 denied just by having a valid I94 because it does not  
25 contain photo and fingerprint, which most versions do  
not.

3 So, if it's not adequately addressed here but I  
4 would like to encourage the Council to continue  
5 [INAUDIBLE 02:41:54]—

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 NOAH HABEEB: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will now call  
10 our next panel. We have Nilbia Coyotta followed by  
11 Kathleen DiPerna, Medha Ghosh and Josh Bentley.  
12 Nilbia, you can go ahead when the Sergeants call  
13 time.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 NILBIA COYOTTA: Good afternoon everyone. I'm so  
16 sorry by behavior at previous intervention. I am  
17 actually located in lower Manhattan because today is  
18 Workers Memorial Day and we are at NICE preparing our  
19 event to honor all the workers who have died in the  
20 workplace, including the hundreds of immigrant  
21 workers and asylum seekers. We are actually  
22 remembering Carlos Monkiu(SP?) who was a young new  
23 immigrant when he died in 2015 in a construction  
24 site.

25 So, on behalf of all of them, I'm giving this  
testimony today. As a reminder, my organization,

3 NICE mission is to organize new immigrant workers,  
4 day laborers and families in New York City to build  
5 their collective power. To achieve this, we combine  
6 this train of work for asylum training and education  
7 and workers rights, advocacy and programs tailored to  
8 immigrant workers. We have said this before and I'm  
9 repeating this today, NICE has always supported  
10 recently arrived immigrants and asylum seekers and  
11 over the last year, we have been doing that exact  
12 work.

13 Over the last six months NICE has welcomed an  
14 average of 900 to 1,000 asylum seekers per month and  
15 we have seen an exponential growth in the demand for  
16 our workers development services that includes the  
17 trainings of OSHA SST and also trade skills such as  
18 painting, plumbing, electricity, flooring, among many  
19 others to equip all these new members of our society.  
20 We comprehensively equip asylum seekers. We choose  
21 the knowledge to find jobs because we believe in  
22 their talent. We see their skills and abilities and  
23 we invest in that. Among our new members, we have  
24 talked to architects, designers, entrepreneurs,  
25 accountants, engineers. We know that all these  
asylum seekers have the talent to contribute to the



1 city, to this society and the city and that's their  
2 biggest desire.

3  
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 NILBIA COYOTTA: NICE is uniquely prepared to  
6 help this population navigate the complicated  
7 landscape and we would appreciate building the  
8 infrastructure with us to allow our thousands of new  
9 members to thrive and to continue their journey in  
10 their new city. Thank you so much for your time and  
11 consideration.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
13 Kathleen DiPerna followed by Medha Ghosh. Kathleen,  
14 you can go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 KATHLEEN DIPERNA: Good Afternoon Chairs Hanif  
17 and Ung, Council Members and Staff. Thank you for  
18 the opportunity to testify today on Rethink Food's  
19 efforts to support New York City and the work we as  
20 an organization are doing to help with the migrant  
21 crisis.

22 My name is Kathleen DiPerna, and I am the  
23 Director of Government Relations at Rethink Food, a  
24 nonprofit with the mission to create a more  
25 sustainable and equitable food system. One in which

3 every New Yorker has access to dignified, culturally  
4 responsive, and nutritious meals. Currently, we are  
5 operating in 32 council districts across all 5  
6 boroughs in support and partnership with the Council  
7 and Administration will be critical to ensuring that  
8 we can continue to operate our programs and support  
9 our new neighbors arriving in the city.

10 For a quick background, we were founded in 2017  
11 on the premise of transforming excess food from  
12 restaurants, corporate kitchens, and grocery stores  
13 into meals delivered to community-based  
14 organizations. Today our kitchen still operates and  
15 we run that program, preparing on average of 8,000  
16 meals a week for 12 CBOs in Queens, Brooklyn, and  
17 Manhattan. And our work has evolved to include other  
18 program to address food insecurity, the Rethink  
19 Certified restaurant program.

20 We launched this during the COVID-19 pandemic and  
21 partner with restaurants to prepare culturally  
22 relevant meals for the community, especially for  
23 those experiencing food insecurity. And you know, in  
24 addition to applying to our programs to help you know  
25 address this ever-persistent challenge of food  
insecurity that exists in New York City, we have

3 historically used our programs to respond to other  
4 emergency and challenges that arise, like the COVID-  
5 19 pandemic, the Twin Parks fire, gas and water  
6 outages at NYCA facilities and most recently the  
7 migrant crisis.

8 We first started responding to this specific  
9 population in August of 2022 after a community call  
10 for meals for asylum seekers arriving at Port  
11 Authority. Our response grew as we heard more from  
12 our network of community partners. And since August,  
13 we've distributed an additional 90,000 meals across  
14 the city primarily in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 KATHLEEN DIPERNA: Thank you for the time to  
17 testify today. I will submit the rest of my  
18 testimony in writing.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
20 Medha Ghosh followed by Josh Bentley. Medha, you can  
21 go ahead when the Sergeants call time.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MEDHA GHOSH: Good afternoon, my name is Medha  
24 Ghosh and I am the Health Policy Coordinator at CACF,  
25 the Coalition for Asian American Children and  
Families. Thank you very much to Chair Hanif and

3 Chair Ung for holding this hearing and providing this  
4 opportunity to testify. Founded in 1986, CACF is the  
5 nation's only pan-Asian children and families'  
6 advocacy organization and leads the fight for  
7 improved and equitable policies, systems, funding,  
8 and services to support those in need.

9 CACF is in support of Intro Bill 839, as we  
10 believe establishing an Office of Refugee and Migrant  
11 Settlement would assist in ensuring that asylum  
12 seekers receive the care and services they need.

13 With the large influx of asylum seekers resettling to  
14 New York City in the past year, now more than ever,  
15 we must ensure that our healthcare system is  
16 linguistically accessible and culturally responsive  
17 for the Limited English Proficient LEP community,  
18 that includes asylum seekers.

19 The lack of linguistically accessible services in  
20 healthcare settings can have grave consequences.

21 More than half of adverse events that occurred to LEP  
22 patients in U.S. hospitals were likely the result of  
23 communication errors, and nearly half of these events  
24 involved some form of physical harm. As asylum  
25 seekers resettle to New York City, they carry with  
them an immense amount of trauma from the violent

3 experience of being forced to leave their homes. It  
4 is crucial that the city work to ensure that asylum  
5 seekers can feel as safe as possible as they adjust  
6 to their life here. As they navigate the healthcare  
7 system, consistent access to quality language  
8 services is a necessary step to ensure their health  
9 concerns are fully heard and taken care of.

10 This also includes mental health services, which  
11 must be both linguistically accessible and culturally  
12 responsive to asylum seekers' needs. For this to  
13 occur, our recommendations include: Investing in  
14 community-led and community-based language accessible  
15 and culturally responsive mental health resources;  
16 and prioritize the recruitment and retainment of  
17 multilingual mental healthcare professionals to  
18 ensure high quality care.

19 Overall, we see a need for more intentional  
20 collaboration between the city and community-based  
21 organizations to better identify language access and  
22 mental health services gaps in our communities and to  
23 find and implement solutions that will have a direct  
24 positive impact on the wellbeing of all our  
25 communities. Thank you very much for your time.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we have  
4 Josh Bentley and then followed by Shana McCormick.  
5 Josh, you can go ahead when the Sergeant calls time.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 JOSH BENTLEY: Hello Committee Members. My name  
8 is Josh Bentley and I am a Grants and Advocacy  
9 Coordinator at Korean Community Services of  
10 Metropolitan New York, Inc. or KCS for short.

11 Founded in 1973, Korean Community Services is the  
12 oldest and largest Korean nonprofit organization  
13 assisting under-served communities across the New  
14 York City area.

15 Our mission is to be a nexus of service for these  
16 communities, helping them maintain their health and  
17 wellbeing. Our services reach across the five  
18 boroughs and are centered around the areas of  
19 education, public health, workforce, immigration,  
20 mental health and aging. As our organization has  
21 grown, adapted, and evolved, so has our programming  
22 and the departments that provide said services.

23 As of 2022, a new addition to our organization is  
24 our Immigration Department. With the direction of  
25 our in-house attorney and legal aides, we are able to  
serve our clients in the areas of immigration and

3 naturalization, domestic relations, bankruptcy, and  
4 employment. In Fiscal Year 2023, our Immigration  
5 Department served 187 community members in in-person  
6 legal services. And in the same Fiscal Year, the  
7 Department served 588 community members in legal  
8 consultations over-the-phone or virtually.

9 Our Immigration Department is expected to grow  
10 exponentially and reach more and more community  
11 members as it evolves. Recently, our Immigration and  
12 Legal team were able to aid two community members in  
13 moments of personal crisis. One was a man from North  
14 Korea, looking to settle into New York City and live  
15 an independent life. The other was a mother who had  
16 lost contact with her family in Los Angeles and had  
17 not seen them in twenty years. Our Immigration team  
18 worked tirelessly to see that both these clients were  
19 cared for. The unfortunate reality, however, is that  
20 our Immigration Department has not received funding  
21 in the past. This has severely limited our ability  
22 to serve our community and compensate our dedicated  
23 staff.

24 And furthermore, as a result of onboarding of on-  
25 site staff attorneys who can provide direct services,  
KCS is poised to hit the ground running to begin

3 addressing the significant legal challenges and needs  
4 of our community members. I am here to ask the  
5 Committee on Immigration to please consider  
6 supporting our Immigration Department through the  
7 Discretionary budget, as we as other endeavors as we  
8 know you all understand and value the importance of  
9 serving our immigrant communities.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 JOSH BENTLEY: Your support will ensure that our  
12 team can grow, reach more clients in need of legal  
13 assistance, and thrive in the coming years. Thank  
14 you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And next, we have  
16 Shana McCormick. You can go ahead when the Sergeants  
17 call time.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 SHANA MCCORMICK: Hi, good afternoon everyone.  
20 First and foremost, thank you to the Committees and  
21 to all for allowing this space for us to testify. My  
22 name is Shana McCormick and I am the Executive  
23 Director for the Skyline Charitable Foundation. I'm  
24 also the Program Director for RAP for Bronx, the  
25 Release to Access Program for the Bronx and food  
relief program. We have our - my organization has



3 been involved with regards to asylum seeker relief  
4 efforts since last, early last summer along with many  
5 others I'm sure in this space and in this room. And  
6 I'm here really today to be able to speak to the  
7 workforce development side, employment authorization  
8 and the importance of expedited employment  
9 authorization for our asylum seeker population. We  
10 currently are conducting, we just actually finished  
11 nine minutes ago, one of our courses. We're in the  
12 midst of a 62-hour OSHA site safety training  
13 suspended and supported scaffolding training for the  
14 construction and restoration industry. An industry  
15 in which many asylum seekers from South America have  
16 background in but need proper training especially in  
17 safety and other areas to be able to perform and get  
18 jobs here in New York City.

19 We want to be able to set them on the proper path  
20 for success and a part of that is being able to work  
21 lawfully and legally here. And I think that besides  
22 you know obviously getting them on the right path to  
23 success with the proper accreditations, safety  
24 training and then legal employment, it would just you  
25 know do a great service to the city, the state and a

3 federal level for revenue that we can generate  
4 through this as well.

5 And we have ready, willing participants here that  
6 really are looking after they complete these courses  
7 to be able to get to work. It's definitely needed  
8 within that field and we would like to just -

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 SHANA MCCORMICK: For them to get legal  
11 employment but thank you for the time.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you so  
13 much. If we have not called anyone either via Zoom  
14 or in the Council Chambers, please let us know on  
15 Zoom. You can use the raise hand function and we  
16 will call you for testimony.

17 Seeing no additional witnesses, Chairs, would you  
18 like to give any closing statements?

19 CHAIRPERSON HANIF: Thank you. Well, thank you  
20 so much for an informative hearing. We are looking  
21 forward to advancing policy that make the lives of  
22 immigrants much, much safer and I want to extend my  
23 gratitude to the Admin and the public, all of our  
24 advocates for testifying. We will be back here in  
25 just a few days for Executive Budget Hearing to dig  
deeper about legal services funding, expanding

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IDNYC's reach and much more. And with that, I will  
close us out. Thank you. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date           MAY 19, 2023